The Comic Times

No.2 Sept. $2.00

CLOSEUP: POPEYE, FLASH GORDON PHOTOS!

"THREE DAREDEVILS AND A WICKED EMPIRE" by Don McGregor

"STEVE ENGLEHART DELIVERS THE GOODS"

A Candid Interview

John Pound

POWER & GLORY

POWER AND GLORY – John Pound. John Pound is rapidly becoming one of the top names in fantasy illustration. Since his debut portfolio, **Beyond Heaven And Hell,** was published early last year, he has been working on six large paintings inspired by plate 6 of **Beyond Heaven And Hell.**

Power And Glory is the story of a massive war on a fantasy planet of Pound's imagination. It is a world populated with a variety of beast-men that stun the senses. Lion and bear-headed warriors are armed with both swords and automatic weapons. There is a legion of wolf-headed cavalry, each mounted on steeds of glistening steel armor. In the center plate, this legion thunders in a death charge against boar artillery.

There is the haunting image of an anthropomorphosised cobra in flowing scarlet robes giving a war speech to a huge throng. The scene is reminiscent of Nurenburg in World War II.

Another highlight of this portfolio is the final plate, a wild victory feast in a sacked city. John Pound's polished painting technique creates a glowing effect as the fire light is reflected from the bronze ornaments and wine goblets.

The cover to **Power And Glory** is rich gold-embossing on thick black stock. The plates are reproduced on coated stock, using expensive color reproduction methods to capture Pound's subtle tones.

Power And Glory could well be the portfolio of the year. It is a deluxe limited-edition of 1,200. Each copy is signed and numbered by the artist. The retail price is $35.00.

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"WHAT KIND OF A MAGAZINE IS THIS?"

I can't tell you how often I heard that reaction to the first issue of *The Comic Times*. It was as if the novelty of the magazine intimidated them. I find myself amused by people supposedly interested in experiments and innovations who feel compelled to try to categorize every new thing they encounter. And God help you if you don't fit in some arbitrary cubbyhole!

There was a lot of talk around the office of changing our title. For some reason if you put "comics" in the title of your magazine and report on the comic scene, it is routinely assumed that you are an imitator of the other successful magazines in the field. Never mind that you devote only about 50% of your magazine to comics. Never mind that you are expanding your coverage to include a wide scope of popular art forms. Never mind that your editorial stance is different. Never mind that your entire approach is as a professional magazine rather than a fanzine. Never mind that your staff has a whole different perspective about comics and the other arts. You are expected to fill a slot.

Harlan Ellison frequently complains about being popularly accepted as 'only a science fiction writer' though much of his work is not science fiction. In publishing, just as in politics, what you are is not important. Your future is determined by what people *think* you are.

* * *

It's always dangerous to map out a statement of purpose when you are tackling a new enterprise. Any form of show business or the arts is affected by too many unpredictable and uncontrollable elements. Consider the example of Charles Foster Kane who had his own marker-scrawled words thrust back at him by his only friend Jedediah Leland (Joseph Cotton).

So rather than preaching from the pulpit, let me climb down to a more comfortable level and tell you what I hope to accomplish with *The Comic Times*.

Our society is dominated by popular culture. The "entertainment industry" has evolved into one of the largest industries in the world. "The conglomerates are the story of the 70's," as Steve Englehart says in this issue's interview. *The Comic Times* will cover the latest Hollywood releases just as we cover the Marvel and DC line.

However, advances in technology have made it cheaper and thus more feasible for the creation of a "smaller mass art" where the creators/artists often are able to work with a freedom denied to them by the conglomerates. In comics, witness the Independents like Eclipse and Raw Books. In movies witness the development of the "low-budget, independent" phenomenon. In TV or "video" witness the growth of the "video artist." Much of the finest work in these mediums is emerging from this rejection of the traditional media establishment. *The Comic Times* intends to keep you abreast of the latest developments, while also offering an insight from a different perspective.

I'm very pleased with the people who are now regularly contributing to the magazine. They are well-informed and able to write with authority on a wide variety of topics. In this issue we're striving to overcome the "first issue blues", an occupational hazard of independent publishing. In the mad drive "to get the damn thing out to the printers already," sometimes things slip by that shouldn't. Never again.

This issue we devote almost one quarter of our magazine to David M. Singer's chat with one of the most important comic book writers of the 70's. A major influence on todays comics, Steve Englehart reminisces about his work and offers an informed insight to the drastic changes that occured in the comics industry during the mid-seventies. He also describes what motivated his decision to leave comics and become a novelist at the height of his popularity and explains the reasoning behind his recent withdrawal of three of his scripts from DC.

Don McGregor measures the *Star Wars* movies against creator George Lucas' acknowledged inspiration, the serials of the 30's and 40's. It's always a blast working with Don, who is one of those "independent" writers deservedly benefitting from the alternative publishing explosion. Don recalls the excitement of childhood in "Three Daredevils and a Wicked Empire", his look at the most popular films of all-time.

I guess you've already noticed this issue's beautiful wraparound cover. Rick Bryant is a wonderfully talented artist who's work I've admired from a distance for quite some time. It was a pleasant surprise, when I learned that Rick had agreed to do a painting for this issue. Turn Rick Bryant loose and what you get is work equivalent to what graces our cover. It's well worth the effort. For an honest portrait of the man behind our cover, take a look at John Warner's "Skyships and Earth Nymphs." One of the nice things about this job is that it puts you back in touch with people you haven't seen in a long time.

It had been more than two years since I last spoke to John Warner, when he called the office last month. We both drifted in different directions: John had left Marvel and I had set out to pursue a directing career. When you put yourself into your work it's hard to keep contact with the people outside your immediate social sphere. You regret the relationships and friends that you find yourself forced to sacrifice, but that's the price for integrity. I welcome this second chance with John and promise not to blow it again.

Andy Helfer who contributed an incisive examination of the merchandising phenomenon of **The Empire Strikes Back** last issue, looks at what makes us laugh in his review of **The Blues Brothers**. "You Are What You Drive" offers a different insight into the antics of two of America's top comedians.

Newcomer Richard Bensam answers the question "Who is DR. WHO?" in his report on the cult British TV series. Added to our regular features like Whiz and the Kid and The James Burns Media Report is a new series: Whatever Happened to . . . This issue we quash the rumors that have circulated following Tony Isabella's departure from the New York comic book scene. Be sure to write and let us know who *you* would like us to spotlight in future issues.

I'm happy to welcome two regular contributors to our comic strip section. **Dopin' Dan** is one of the most famous characters to emerge from the underground comix movement. Ted Richards takes Mort Walker one giant step further in this whacky, zany parody of army life.

The quality of Murad Gumen's **Blowtorch** should be self evident. I've been aware of Murad's work for quite a while. He wrote and drew a regular comic strip in the student newspaper at Queens College when I went to school there. After he graduated, I noticed his work in **Crazy** magazine. It was nice to know that one of your contemporaries had achieved some measure of success in a difficult field. It's even nicer to be able to give him the freedom to try something different. After seeing **Blowtorch** I'm sure you'll appreciate that freedom.

But you still need a convenient slot to put us in, in order to feel comfortable with *The Comic Times*. To be honest, I don't know if I can really help you because our format is so open-ended. I can tell you that we will be adding a TV column, a music column and a publishing column in future issues to keep you up-to-date on what is happening in this global village of ours. Also, I expect our comic strip section to expand as more material becomes available to us. We soon will be publishing original prose fiction in every issue. Articles being assigned cover a wide gamut of topics ranging from a report on **The Rocky Horror Picture Show** cult to a close scrutiny of the Wolverine's anatomy.

So what are we, you still ask? Well try this one on for size: "a media-arts magazine, examining popular arts with a perspective based upon comic book and "B" movie roots." How's that for a slot?

So stick with us. We intend to challenge you every month and make this magazine worth your two bucks. And don't be so quick to classify us. We defy classification. And that's a lot of the fun.

Stay loose

Mark Gasper

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The Comic Times

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I GET ALL MY HEAVY COMIX FROM TH' VILLAGE COMIC ART SHOP IN NEW YORK CITY, THEN I HITCHIKE OUT TO TH' WEST COAST HERE AND READ 'EM...
SAYS:
THE FORTY YEAR OLD HIPPIE AND CHILD PERSON
RIP
RIP
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village comic art shop

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GUEST EDITORIAL

COMICS & THE PRIVATE CONSCIOUSNESS

by **Frank McGinty**

A large percentage of comics fandom has always discussed the writing in comics. Fans, depending on what factions they belong to, are today either exclaiming over the subtleties and depth of characterization they profess to find in the scripts of Chris Claremont, or they are concocting complicated schemes for the torture and banishment of Gerry Conway, deriding Marvel influence in general (as if the best-selling comics haven't always "influenced" the other houses), and pining for the good old days of Fox, Broome, Hamilton, Binder and their childhoods.

This has always seemed to me a peculiar error, since there is so little writing in comics. A comics scripter's main efforts are directed towards hatching a plot, after all, and not to crafting fine prose or sparkling dialogue. And, if we grant that the "writing" function in comics is more of a story-making task, we aren't out of the woods either, since nearly all comic book plots are preposterously simplistic and striking in their lack of originality.

What we are left with are the concepts behind the scripts: the heroic ideals, the sense of commitment to a worthy cause, the physical expression of personality inherent in the fights and journeys essential to comics and to adventure stories. And once we come this far, we must admit that these concepts are expressed as much by the art in comics as by the scripts. Indeed, when the scripter becomes caught up in the formula plotting devices and contrived story elements judged commercial by editors, the artist can express these concepts more directly.

The majority of those inhabiting fandom have little knowledge of the arts in general and of the visual and plastic arts in particular. Not too surprising, this: after all, everyone studies English in high school, and so there is no shortage of people to "interpret" the latest Steve Englehart story or to yammer about the primacy of story in comics. When it comes to painting or drawing or sculpture, fans, like the proverbial great unwashed, (and like too many art directors and editors) know what they like, and what they like is a conventional depiction of a prettified reality. This is truer today than it has been at anytime since the fifties.[1] Today's foremost art team is considered to be John Byrne and Terry Austin.[2] have had samples of Nasser and Rubinstein waved under my nose as examples of terrific comic art ("Joe Kubert? Who's he?"). Twelve year olds are enamoured of Mike Grell, and kids repeatedly tell me that their favourite Spider-Man artist is John Romita, and look askance when I mention Steve Ditko. Lest I be taken for a crotchety old coot, let me hasten to add that such misjudgements are not limited to the younger set: how many older fans are still hung up on Murphy Anderson?

Most people tend to focus on the rendering of a drawing, since that is the surface which first greets their eyes. The rendering they seem to like most consists of sharp clean lines with fair amounts of surface detailing such as cross-hatching and feathering. (Feathering is the bane of fan artists, who haven't tipped to the fact that it is supposed to express something in the drawing; they take it as a convention of comic art, and mindless, put it all over the picture.) This accounts for the Anderson cult. Once someone has trained his eye to look beyond the surface of the drawing, he begins to appreciate the artist's drawing ability and compositional sense, thereby penetrating to the heart of the comics, since cartooning relies necessarily on composition and exaggerated yet substantial drawing, and not on fine rendering. The development of the reader's sensibility is a gradual process, since drawing and rendering are two aspects of the same function in fact, if not (under the assembly-line mentality) in practice. Graduation from the school which appreciates rendering most leads variously to the cult of competence (Swan, Romita, and so many others; this attitude achieves its apotheosis in the statement "You know, Don Heck isn't all that bad . . ."), the muscle fantasy crowd, and the students of movies on paper.

These various approaches are not in themselves foolish, but usually become so when those readers innocent of much experience or thought find they like one sort of art and never apply other sets of criteria. And none of the aforementioned schools deal with the fundamental question of what the art means. What purpose does that feathering serve? To what end has the penciller broken the action down into a multitude of tiny panels, like celluloid frames pasted on the page one by one? Why is everyone in the story, including the little old lady on page three and the ninety-seven pound weakling on page twelve, drawn as handsome specimens of healthful muscularity?

If no one will be so ingracious as to mention art for art's sake, we will all probably be able to agree that comic art exists (all together now) TO TELL THE STORY! But how exactly does one go about this? Does one tell a story the way Mort Weisinger's artists did, with everything very simple and clear and diagrammatic? When Superman flew through time, he would travel past a series of rings carefully labelled "1844", "1910", "2465", and so on. When he thought about someone, a little cloud would appear over his head with a drawing of the character inside. Obviously not, as the artist's function is to involve the reader by expressing the story concepts, and not simply to depict what the scripter has written (as demonstrated above).

I have always found comics interesting because they have allowed certain artists to express their secret passions. What we must consider is not so much the details of storytelling (these are important for those producting comics, less so for those reading them) as the point at which storytelling evolves and is transmuted into picture making. We must consider what a drawing tells us, not just in the context of the depiction but in the very manner of the depiction. Kirby's work, for instance, is so electrifying that it dwarfs what Gil Kane calls commonplace notions of draftsmanship, and creates its own expressive standards. Thus, it doesn't matter that his characters look like they were hewn out of rock or cut from steel; indeed, that is part of their particular virtue. Certainly the work, as art, is crude and limited—what Kirby wants to convey is undoubtedly crude and limited—but this is less true of his work than it is of the vast majority of mock-realistic comic art.

Joe Kubert has never dominated the field in the way Kirby has, though he should certainly be ranked with the King as the top of the field. He tends not to be appreciated because he hasn't worked on "fannish" titles, but his years of labour on war and other non-super adventure strips allowed him to develop his brooding, fatalistic, emotionally charged style. Both Kirby and Kubert challenge not merely commonplace notions of draftsmanship, but commonplace notions of reality. One of the chief functions of art is to vicariously expand our experience, to show us the way things really are or the way they could be, as opposed to the way they seem to be to the unthoughtful and imperceptive. The reality in the art of Kirby and Kubert is an emotional one, and challenges a young person in a way Neal Adams' "Hollywood on paper" does not. It is, therefore, no surprise that Romita is the preferred Spider-Man artist, as his conventional and ultimately false worldview (fundamentally that of "young love" comic books) is more palatable to a mass audience. Yet, one tiny facet of my consciousness was changed the day I realised that Ditko's anatomy was more correct than Romita's.

Now that the comics field, like most popular culture, has frozen into a kind of flaccid rigour, it is vital to realise that the "eccentrics" are needed to create new forms. The second rate artist can sell when given a format, but they have never created anything of consequence. And yet, those very qualities which could achieve new successes are deliberately suppressed by established publishers who seem intent on cutting their own throats by protecting formats in which people have, for the most part, lost interest. National blanderized its line in the fifties[3] after an innovative period, and has since paid the price by losing its sales supremacy and becoming a marginal operation. Similarly, Marvel, after its innovative period in the sixties[4], had made its books even more conventional than formerly, and it too will pay the price. The history of comics demonstrates that a few individuals have provided the vision and energy which kept hordes of hacks employed for years, and without them there remains only slow extinction for the comics. ■

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TODAY'S ARMY

WITH DOPIN' DAN

©1980 By TED RICHARDS

THE "MOONLITE BRIGADE"

HEY, GUNNER. HOW ABOUT LENDIN' ME TWENTY BUCKS 'TIL PAYDAY...
UH - SURE!
HA - TWENTY BUCKS IS NOTHIN' THESE DAYS - HOW'D YOU LIKE TO EARN SOME BIG MONEY FOR A CHANGE?

A'RIGHT, HERE'S TH'GIG - YOU CAN JOIN OUR TROOP OF "PART-TIME" SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE CALLED TH' MOONLITE BRIGADE...
FAR-OUT. I'LL TRY ANYTHING ONCE---

THAT NIGHT.
THERE'S OUR XC-200 P.D.Q.* TRANSPORT. WE GOTTA CONTRACT IN BOOMBAWWE, AFRICA, TONIGHT..
Y'GOT TO BE PUTTIN' ME ON...
C'MON YOU'LL SEE...
* PRETTY DAMN QUICK

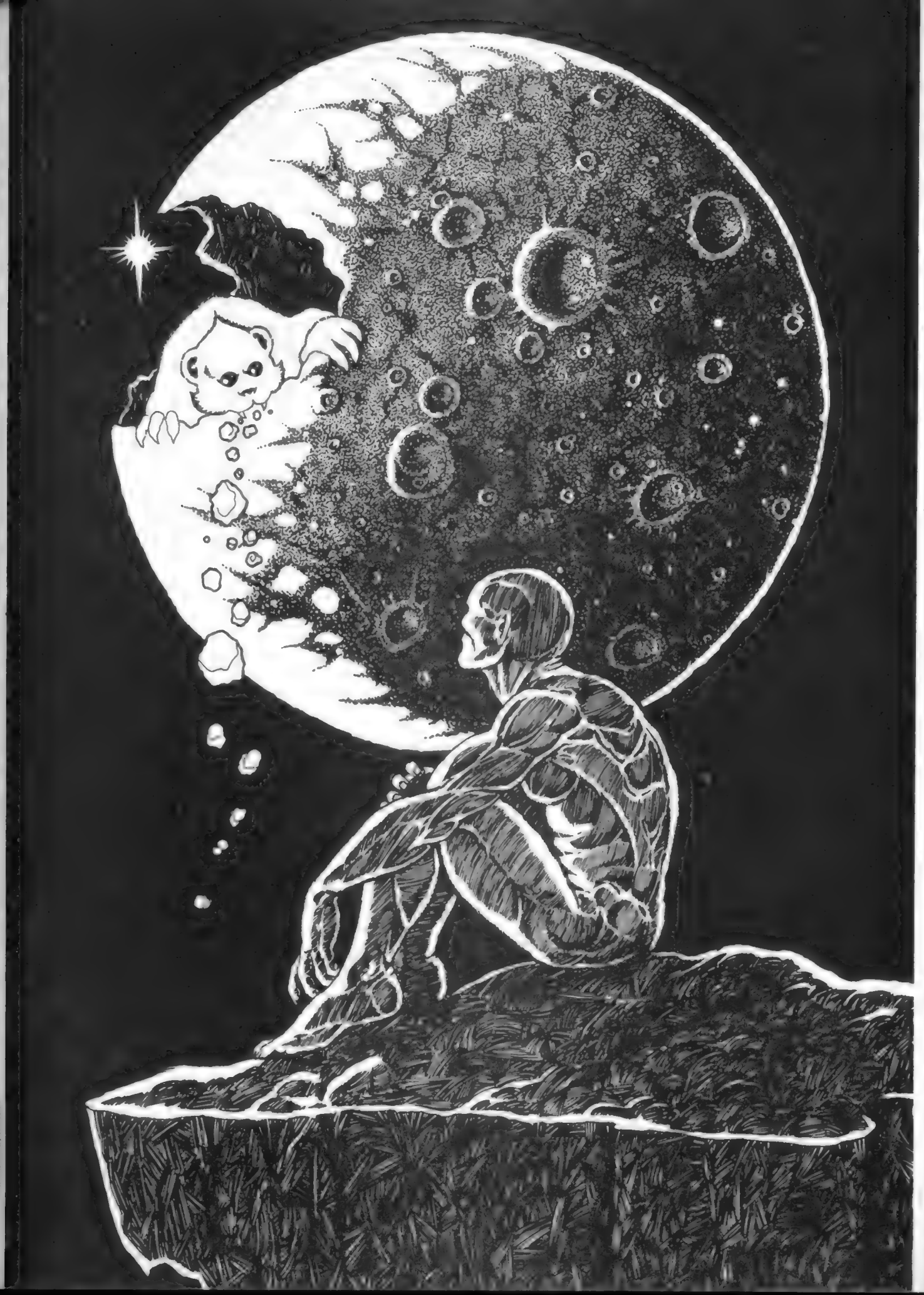
1
THIS XC-200 P.D.Q IS A NEW TOP SECRET S.T.O.L., SUPERSONIC, MACH 5, MAIN BATTLE SUPPORT AIRCRAFT THAT'S MADE IN FRANCE...
2
HANG ON - WE'RE BOOSTING UP TO MACH 5 - WE'LL HIT BOOMBAWWE IN ABOUT FORTY MINUTES!
ZWIP

YEP... THIS IS TH' ONLY JOB TH' ARMY REALLY TRAINS YOU FOR....
RIGHT, THEN THEY GIVE ALL TH' MONEY TO THE GUYS WHO MAKE TH' GUNS!
I'LL DRINK TO THAT...
Zzz

C'MON - WE'RE FIGHTIN' FOR TH' POPULAR TRIBAL FRONT T'NIGHT.
ARE THEY TH' GOOD GUYS OR BAD GUYS?
WHO GIVES A @!%#*?!!! JUST SHOOT T'KILL AND YOU'LL BE A'RIGHT!
HERE - IF YOU'RE CAPTURED, TAKE THIS SUICIDE CAPSULE - IT'LL CHEAT 'EM OUT OF THEIR KICKS WHEN THEY GET A HOLD OF MERCENARY PRISONERS....
WHUPS! TIME TO EARN OUR WAGES!
BUDDA BUDDA BOOT
AND ON AND ON THROUGH THE NIGHT.
C'MON - WE GOTTA SCRAMBLE, OR WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT BACK IN TIME FOR REVEILLE*!
* THE BUGLE CALL THAT BEGINS EACH MILITARY DAY——
LATER THE NEXT DAY BACK AT FT. FRAGG...
WANNA MAKE ANOTHER GO OF IT TONIGHT?
UH.. NAW. I GOT ENOUGH TO LAST ME 'TIL PAYDAY
ZZZ

BLOWTORCH
©'80 m. gumen
SHE SAID SHE WOULD COME BUT SHE ISN'T HERE. NOW I START TO WORRY. I WORRY THAT SHE'S BEEN INTERCEPTED. I WORRY THAT THIS HAS BEEN A SET-UP. MOSTLY, I WORRY THAT I'VE BEEN STOOD UP! WAIT—FOOTSTEPS..
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
THE FOOTSTEPS ARE GETTING CLOSER! IT MUST BE...IT IS A TRAP! COULD IT BE AN OLD ENEMY...LIKE THE COLLECTION AGENCY? THEY... THEY'RE GETTING NEARER! OH, GOD! IT'S...IT'S...
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
IT'S SOME BRAT WITH A TOY CLICKER PRACTICING FOR SOME SLIDE PROJECTION SHOW!
CLICK!
CLICK!
CLICK!
ARE YOU... BLOWTORCH?
YAAAGH!
WHAT'S THE MATTA WITH YOU—YOU CRAZY? YOU CAN SCARE A PERSON LIKE THAT, FOR GOODNESS' SAKE!
PLEASE... GET DOWN. THERE IS SO LITTLE TIME...
STREET
AVENUE
SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL—WITH PEARLY WHITE LIPS AND A RUBY RED NOSE. I...I WAS ALWAYS A SUCKER FOR BEAUTIFUL DAMES. THAT, AND PEANUT BUTTER WITH RADISH SANDWICHES.
SO LITTLE TIME? WHAT DO YOU MEAN—IS YOUR LIFE IN DANGER? ARE YOU BEING FOLLOWED?
NO.., BUT IF WE DON'T HURRY, I MIGHT MISS THE BEGINNING OF "BJ AND THE BEAR"!
I'M HIRING YOU TO PROTECT A MAN NAMED WEEDE. HIS WIFE AND HER NEW LOVER ARE PLANNING TO MURDER HIM FOR HIS MONEY.
GEE... I DON'T KNOW! THAT SOUNDS DANGEROUS! I USUALLY HANDLE MATRIMONIAL WORK, MISSING PERSONS...STUFF LIKE THAT!
OH, MR. BLOWTORCH... YOU MUST ACCEPT THE CASE! OUT OF ALL THE PRIVATE EYES, I'VE CHOSEN YOU! YOU CAN'T LET ME DOWN!
WELL, GEE, OKAY... BUT WHY ME? BECAUSE I WORK WITH GUTS, LOGIC AND PETERMINATION?
NO, BECAUSE YOU WORK CHEAP!
W-WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?
THAT WAS A CAR! AND IF YOU'VE EVER SEEN "THE UNTOUCHABLES," YOU'D KNOW CARS CAN RUB OUT PEOPLE! DOESN'T PAY TO TAKE CHANCES, Y'KNOW!
YOU'RE TOO MUCH, BLOWTORCH! AND THAT'S A PHONY MONIKER IF I EVER HEARD ONE!
OKAY, I CONFESS! BUT I HAD TO GET A NEW HANDLE..."RUDI MOZZLENURD" JUST DIDN'T SOUND LIKE A DETECTIVE, Y'KNOW! I HAD TO GET A MACHO "TOOL" NAME...LIKE SAM SPADE OR MIKE HAMMER!
SO WHAT WAS LEFT? "RUDI SAW"? NOPE! "RUDI MONKEY WRENCH"? NAAH! "RUDI SCREWDRI..." HEY!
SHE WAS GONE! I QUICKLY DEDUCED THAT SHE WAS EITHER A) A GHOST OR B) PLAYING HIDE & SEEK. WITH MY TRAINED DETECTIVE'S BRAIN, I SHOULD BE FIGURING OUT THE MYSTERY IN NO TIME.
Murad

Illustration by Bill Groff.



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STEVE ENGLEHART

"I Deliver the Goods"

© 1980 Marvel Comics Group

as told to David M. Singer

DAVE: You were born in Indianapolis?

STEVE: That's right.

DAVE: Anything to say about Indianapolis?

STEVE: No, not really. It's a place to come from. I prefer the west coast, and second to that I prefer the east coast, and then the midwest comes in third. I haven't been to Texas so I can't say.

DAVE: Did you read comics as a child?

STEVE: Yes, I did. I read the comics from as far back as I can remember, up until I was about 13, and then I gave them up because I outgrew them. They were too childish.

I remember a letter in a *Superboy* where somebody wrote in and said, "Superboy lives in America, why doesn't he fight the Commies?" And the answer was, "Well, he doesn't get involved in political stuff." And at the age of 13, I thought, "Well, this is obviously fantasy. This has no basis in reality." And that's it.

I had a complete set, throughout my childhood, of all of Barks' material, little knowing, of course.

And I was a big fan of the Dick Tracy comics: the reprints. I've always really liked that dark and lurky kind of character: that weird stuff like Dick Tracy or Batman. Those were my favorites.

Then, when I was in college, in the Spring of '66, a friend of mine came up and showed me a *Spider-Man*, and I really liked it. It was a Ditko *Spider-Man*. So I got back into comics. Those were the days when you could still collect the old issues for a nickel a shot, so I was able to catch up.

DAVE: You bought the back issues?

STEVE: Yes. I collected all of them through the sixties. I think it was at Seuling's convention in '71 when I plugged up the remaining holes in my collection.

Even then they were like a quarter an issue, so I could afford to do that. I collected long before the Price Guide came along and really turned comics into a business. Before, it was just for fans.

DAVE: When you were in school, did you concentrate on writing, or did that come later?

STEVE: My father's a newspaper reporter, so it was in the house and I guess it was in my blood. I never really concentrated on writing. I wrote stories as a kid. I did do that. But I also played baseball, and did a lot of other things when I was a kid. That was just one of the things I did.

When it came time to get into comics, what I wanted to do was be an artist. Len Wein, I know, wanted to be an artist, and I'm sure other writers did, too. That's what I wanted to do. I worked with Neal Adams on and off for a while. I was sort of the first of the Continuity Associates.

I worked with him, and I probably inspired him to want to have young guys around who could help him out.

DAVE: You did the background work for Neal's panels?

STEVE: Well, we did everything. He really tried to teach me all the basics of art.

And the thing was, I could see it in my head. I still can, to this very day, and it's helped me in the writing. I could visualize it, but I couldn't get it out of my head and onto the paper the way I wanted it to look.

Perhaps, if I just really dedicated myself to it, and spent a couple of years working my way up, I might have made it as an artist. Look at how much Barry Smith and other artists have changed and developed over the years.

DAVE: You mean you could visualize the layout breakdowns, but you couldn't do the pencils?

STEVE: Exactly! I could do pencils, but they just didn't look professional. I mean, I knew everything in terms of anatomy and motion, but they came out stiff. I was real slow, too. It just happened that writing opened up for me, and I found out I had a talent for that,so I gave up the art.

"... I really liked it. It was a Ditko Spider-Man. So I got back into comics..." Excerpt from *Spider-Man* 35

IF THIS IS ANOTHER FALSE LEAD, I'LL HAVE TO FORGET THE WHOLE THING! I CAN'T KEEP NEGLECTING MY STUDIES THIS WAY MUCH LONGER!
I WONDER HOW MANY OTHER SUPER-HEROES ARE AS WORRIED ABOUT PASSING THEIR EXAMS AS ABOUT BELTING THE BAD GUYS?
THERE HE IS NOW! BUT— WHY IS HE WALKING ALONG A LONELY BACK ALLEY THAT WAY?
COME, CONAN. YOU MUST FALL TO, WITH THE REST OF US.
WHY DO YOU DELAY? WHAT ARE YOU THINKING OF, CONAN?
I WAS ONLY REMEMBERING...
ACCORDING TO MY SOURCES, WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR SHOULD BE— IN THERE!
CROM!
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"... Look at how much Barry Smith and other artists have changed and developed over the years..." (Note the change in style from *Conan* 2 to *Conan* 24.)

"...I believed what Stan said: that [comics] was going to be an art form someday and that we were reaching for the older audience..."

DAVE: Prior to your career as a writer, you spent some time as a colorist, right?

STEVE: Not exactly. Originally, I was in the army, and working with Neal, at the same time. When I got out of the army, I launched myself as an artist and found that I could get very little work. So Neal again took me under his wing and arranged for me to color some comics. That was at DC. I was doing coloring and staff work mechanicals for DC. I was doing some mystery pages and some romance pages. The "Do's and Don'ts of Dating", and all that kind of stuff.

Then I got a shot to go work at *Marvel*. But when I joined on at *Marvel*, I went on as the equivalent of an assistant editor, and I was doing proof reading, and stuff like that. I did color some stuff for *Marvel*, but that was not even secondary. It was tertiary. Coloring was just another skill I used to fill in the time.

I went to work at *Marvel* as an assistant editor, and after a couple of months, I got a chance to write a story and we found out that I could write a good story.

DAVE: What was your first writing assignment?

STEVE: The first thing I wrote was a little story in *Where Monsters Dwell*, or one of those, called "Terror of the Teradactyl", that somebody else—whose name I forget—had plotted. Gary Friedrich was supposed to script, but he didn't like it, so he asked me if I'd do it. I did it, and it turned out to be a decent little monster story. They liked the way I put words together. I had nothing else to do with the rest of it. Then they offered me the Beast. And they liked my work on the Beast, so they gave me *The Defenders* and *Captain America*, and all of a sudden I was a full-fledged writer.

I'M ALWAYS RELIEVED WHEN I CAN DIVEST MYSELF OF MY COSTUME! ACTUALLY I DON'T REALLY CARE FOR THE IDENTITY OF THE BEAST!
I MUCH PREFER BEING HANK MCCOY, HONOR STUDENT... ALTHOUGH FATE NEVER LETS ME REMAIN THAT WAY FOR LONG!

A study in contrast: the Beast from *X-men* 5 and from *Amazing Adventures* 16

--I'VE GOT TO SEARCH FOR THE BIGGER GAME!
NICE OF THE WORLD TO GIVE ME ONE NIGHT IN ONE TOWN WHERE I CAN BE NORMAL!
AND FOR THAT KIND OF HUNT, I HAVE TO FREE THE BEAST!

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DAVE: When you started to work on the Beast, did they give you a slot on *Amazing Adventures* and say, "What would you like to do?" and you picked the Beast, or did they assign the Beast to you?

STEVE: They gave me the Beast. Roy [Thomas] had the idea. There had been a book out, a real book, called *The Beast*, or something, and he thought that was a decent name and thought "Why don't we take that character out of *The X-Men* and change him?" And then he and Gerry Conway worked up the original concept, and Conway wrote the first issue, and I took it over with the second issue.

My contribution was that I gave him his personality. They did not want the old character who spoke in convoluted sentences. They did not think that would work for a starring character, so I got silly with him.

That strip was the precursor of things to come. He was always sort of playing with the concept of his being a beast, and just enjoying being what he is: Weird. You know, "What am I going to do now that I have this hairy body? I'll do the best I can with it."

DAVE: You saw no conflict in continuity—especially since you seem to like maintaining continuity in comics—that somebody who had always been so inactive, so cerebral, would all of the sudden be a happy-go-lucky ne'er do well?

STEVE: But he was still cerebral. He had been using those big words as a defense and he was the shy intellectual type, who hung out with that girl, Vera, or whatever her name was.

She was a librarian and kind of mousey and he had always been kind of repressed. He seemed like a lot of guys that you know in high school who are real brilliant but can't quite loosen up.

"...[The Beast] got older, and he started listening to rock and roll, and—quite frankly—he started smoking dope..."

character © 1980 Marvel Comics Group

I had to take the concept Conway had established, in terms of Hank McCoy being mutated into a hairy beast and all that, but it just seemed to me that it was about time he matured as a character.

When I brought him back in *The Avengers*, I expanded that even further. He got older, and he started listening to rock and roll, and—quite frankly, he started smoking dope (although we couldn't say that in the books).

He just sort of outgrew his earlier phase.

As I said, they wanted something like that done. And he became pretty popular. I think, since I was an unknown writer at that time, and this was a real minor character, the series died after six issues. He just didn't become as successful until later.

DAVE: Did you get any flak from the readers over the change?

STEVE: No. In fact, if you read the *Marvel* letters columns, they're all full of praise. I don't think editors get four rave letters and a 1,000 negative ones and only print the four raves. Generally, readers like what you're doing, or else they wouldn't be reading your comic in the first place. I'd say editors probably get 80-90 percent favorable mail.

It tends to work on your head after a while. I've seen it happen with everybody, including myself. When you start reading hundreds of letters a month saying that you're really wonderful and that you're doing great things, you start to think, "Oh, yes, they must be right, of course."

And, it seems to me that everybody who's been successful as a writer, goes through a period, at least once, where they really ego out, and they say, "Ah yes, I'm the greatest thing since sliced bread." Hopefully, you can regain your perspective, one way or another, and don't start to live in this fantasy world, because eventually it turns out to be a fantasy. Fantasy in the sense that, at best, you're a well thought of comic book writer, which means absolutely nothing to 99.8 percent of the world.

That's what gave me my perspective. I could go to conventions and people would want my autograph and want to talk to me and want an interview, but I walk away from that and nobody knows who I am. So it was real tough for me to go overboard on the thing.

I've seen other people who got heavy into their star trip. But be that as it may, you tend to generally get favorable mail and I was certainly no exception. We were getting good response.

See I believed what Stan said: that it was going to be an art form some day and that we were reaching for the older audience. So that's what I did.

I was a college graduate and an army graduate by that time. So I was writing for my age group, which at that time was mid-20s. And most of the letters came in from that age group. I always had a kind of rapport with them. And that's what led me later to do things like *Dr. Strange* and *The Master of Kung Fu* rather than *The Human Fly*.

"I'd say editors probably get 80-90% favorable mail. It tends to work on your head after awhile . . ."

SO...THAT'S IT. I LISTENED TO THEM ALL, HOPING WITH ALL MY HEART TO HEAR SOME VIEWPOINT I HADN'T CONSIDERED...
...AND I DIDN'T.
THEY WERE ALL RIGHT, IN THEIR OWN WAYS...BUT NONE OF IT MATTERS, BECAUSE THEY ALL MISSED THE CENTRAL POINT!
THE GOVERNMENT CREATED ME IN 1941--CREATED ME TO ACT AS THEIR AGENT IN PROTECTING OUR COUNTRY--
--AND OVER THE YEARS, I'VE DONE MY BEST. I WASN'T PERFECT--I DID THINGS I'M NOT PROUD OF--
--BUT I ALWAYS TRIED TO SERVE MY COUNTRY WELL--
--AND NOW I FIND THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS SERVING ITSELF.
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I felt a lot like Cap did That I'd been betrayed by the whole Watergate trip Excerpt from *Captain America* 176

DAVE: Going back to your formative years, what were your views in college of the war, considering you ended up going into the army?

STEVE: I did not want to go into the army but I did not oppose it strongly enough to go to Canada or try to resist the draft. I felt that "It's something I don't want to do but it's something that I have to do. It's part of being at that age at that time."

After I got into the army, I began to see a little bit more about how the war was being conducted and what the war was all about than I had seen when I was on the outside.

A good friend of mine went to Viet Nam and died.

Then fate intervened, and I eventually got out of the army as a conscientious objector.

So I turned from the average American college student, "I don't want to go but I have no choice," into somebody who actively opposed what was going on, and so I applied for conscientious objector status and got out after 16 months.

I'm glad I was in the army, because it gave me another perspective. It gave me another life experience. And I figure the only reason for life is to have life experiences, as opposed to vegetating.

But at the time, it wasn't the greatest 16 months I had ever spent.

When I was in college, I was probably a mild Republican. Then I turned into a radical Democrat. Now I consider myself a pragmatist. I'm sort of looking to whoever is going to do the best job.

DAVE: Which college did you go to?

STEVE: I went to Weseleyn in Connecticut.

DAVE: Any particular reason?

STEVE: I wanted to come east to college. I had grown up in Indiana—I really don't want to give a bad rap to Indiana because it's a perfectly fine place—but I was looking for new experiences, and going east to college was the thing to do.

So I applied around, and decided on that one. I really liked it and enjoyed getting introduced to the east. I enjoyed the school.

DAVE: Did you ever get sent to Viet Nam?

STEVE: No, when I applied for a conscientious objector discharge, they cut orders that were pending. If I had lost my appeal, I would have gone on the plane within 24 hours.

DAVE: Wow.

STEVE: Well, yeah. But this is the army and they don't kid around, you know. But I won, so I was stationed at Aberdeen Proving Ground down in Maryland doing journalism and radio down there. I was a broadcast/journalism specialist.

DAVE: You seem to inject a heavy sense of eastern philosophy into your stories, especially later on, with Dr. Strange and Shang-Chi. Did any of this come about from your army experience?

STEVE: It came about in the sense that it was in the army that I first got into smoking dope. I mean, it was part of the late sixties, early seventies lifestyle. I hung out with people, listened to the Moody Blues, did all that sort of thing.

But I didn't actively start pursuing it until I took over *Dr. Strange* as a book. Until that point I'd been writing *The Defenders*, and treating him pretty much as a superhero who shot rays out of his palms, instead of whatever else he might do.

But when I took over the book, his own book, I decided that if I was going to write a credible magician, I should study a little magic. And I found out that I liked it, and that led me on into all the related fields. By the time *Master of Kung Fu* came along, I was ready for it. Cosmic is a really overused word, but I do believe in a larger reality than just your everyday stuff.

I'm no religious fanatic; I don't preach it. I just sort of accept that it's there, and it's part of my life, and if I can use it in a story, I'll use it in a story.

DAVE: There was a period in your *Captain America* series where you had Cap become Nomad, and in a sense, by taking away the stars and stripes, intentionally or not, you were making a comment. Was this disillusionment with America related to your Army years?

STEVE: No. I was disillusioned with the war. I was disillusioned with a lot of what America became, but I still believe a lot of what Captain America believes.

I believe that this country is something that always has the possibility of becoming a really wonderful place. And I think it's a continuous struggle between the ideals and the negative parts of capitalism.

So I felt a lot like Cap did. That I'd been betrayed by the whole Watergate trip.

But when I traveled in Europe—and most Americans never get out of America—and saw how other countries worked, I liked America better. I appreciate America more now.

Captain America is a special case. He's not Daredevil and he's not Batman. The book had been at the bottom of the Marvel line and in danger of cancellation until I took it over. It went to the top of the line within six months and stayed there as long as I had it. It immediately went back into the toilet as soon as I left.

". . .I was just a cog in the machine. I try to be a good cog . . ."

I think the reason for that is not so much anything obvious, but that in the *Captain America*'s coming out today, they treat him as if he's a naive person who makes cornball slogans. And I don't think anybody out there reading the book is going to get really interested in somebody we've already established is kind of a dolt.

My Captain America believed what he stood for. I don't think he was corny because what he was saying was decent. It was appropriate for him.

Batman, on the other hand, is a much more right wing, fascist-type character, although I don't think of Batman as fascist. The Batman was a different character and he had to be written differently.

But Captain America had to be taken from a certain approach, and it has been the only successful approach to him in the last 30 years.

When I write, I'm operating out of my own ego and my own life experience. But if they say, "Write a militant female," I'll write a militant female. If they say, "Write *Luke Cage*," I'll do my best to write a black guy. I happen to be white and male, but if you're doing the character, you have to be the character.

DAVE: When you got *Master of Kung Fu*, did you suggest the series concept, or did they assign it to you as their resident Buddist?

STEVE: I wanted to do it, but frankly it was a rip off of the *Kung Fu* TV series, which I really loved. I mean, with my life experience, I really liked that show. I was really in tune with it.

So Jim Starlin said let's do it. We invented this character who had a heavy dose of philosophy but who was in the situation of fighting Fu Manchu and so forth. But after I'd done five issues, they decided they wanted action stories instead. I didn't want to do that so I gave it up at that point. It was Starlin's and my co-creation.

DAVE: Did you feel that the storyline declined once it became more action orientated?

STEVE: It's gone through various periods. I think that the stuff that Doug and Gulacy did was excellent. It's a totally different character from the one I had created. The guy that I created would not have joined up with the Western spy forces and stuff. It's a little too much like James Bond. But that doesn't negate the fact that within the framework of the story, the people who were doing it did a really good job.

I think the first year after I left—when it was pretty much mindless action—was pretty awful. But then when Gulacy came on to it—I have no idea how much

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"K'UEI MÊNG NEVER RETURNED TO MY CLASSES.
"BUT I NEVER SUSPECTED MY FATHER OF VILLANY. I NEVER THOUGHT TO SUSPECT HIM.
SHANG-CHI...
...A MAN WHO IS NOT AT PEACE WITHIN HIMSELF WILL NOT BE AT PEACE WITH ANYTHING ELSE.
YET MY FATHER SEEMS AT PEACE WITH HIS EVIL.
I SPEAK NOT OF YOUR FATHER, SHANG-CHI.
LU SUN, I DO NOT BELIEVE I MAY KNOW PEACE.
I HAVE SWORN TO END MY FATHER'S EMPIRE OF TERROR.
FOR TOO MANY YEARS HAS HE WORKED HIS INSANE DESTRUCTION UPON THE WORLD!
FOR TOO MANY YEARS DID HE WORK HIS DESTRUCTION UPON ME!
REVENGE IS ALSO A DESTROYER OF MEN, MY FRIEND.
THUS, IT BLINDS THEM TO LIFE.
IT BLINDS THEM TO THE PRESENT AS THEY DWELL ON PAST AND FUTURE.
I CANNOT STAND ALOOF.
BUT -- IF I CAN COMBAT AN EVIL, I MUST DO SO.
CAN A MAN DESTROY EVIL?
...NO.
ONE MAN MAY OVERCOME ANOTHER -- ONE ARMY MAY OVERCOME ANOTHER -- BUT THE WORLD IS NOT CHANGED.
MEN WILL ALWAYS CONTEND.

Shang Chi meets Kwai Chang Caine in *Master of Kung Fu* 19

Gulacy contributed—that period was pretty good. After Gulacy left, I don't think it was quite as good.

I haven't really seen comics for the last couple of years because I really put it behind me when I went to write my novel. Since I've been in town, Marvel has given me the last couple of years of the *Master of Kung Fu*. I've looked at them and they look pretty decent. But I haven't read them so I can't say.

I really didn't like having my character turned into something other than what it had been when I created it. And I put a lot of sweat and blood into creating that character and making him . . .coming up with the name, the whole thing with the rising and advancing of the spirit.

There was a lot in there and I didn't like it when they said, "Do it *this* way or else." I said, "I won't do it."

But I think it's basically been a consistently good series, anyway, under the other people.

DAVE: A lot of the work that you had come up with has really been altered since you left. Do you have any feelings of resentment over someone "misusing" your character?

STEVE: No, because I really do see it as a business. I don't appreciate being unable to continue with the character that I invent, like Shang Chi, or Star Lord. I didn't invent Captain America. He was here before I was here, and he's here after I've left.

As far as I'm concerned, I give a series like *Captain America* everything I've got when I'm doing it, but when I'm finished, it still belongs to Marvel. I think the system in which that's true is a pretty lousy system. But I'm a realist. That's what it is, and if I'm going to do comics, that's the way it has to be.

I'm really sorry, in fact, that Jack Kirby had so much trouble with Captain America, because he created him. Unfortuately Jack can't write. If Jack could have worked with a writer, me or anybody, it could have been a much better strip. And I'm sorry that it did go down. I'm sorry that *Dr. Strange* has fallen off so much.

As far as taking over other people's characters, DC came down to me and said they were going to revive *Mr. Miracle*. "It's yours," they said.

And as soon as it was mine I looked at it and said, "Well, here's what I think Kirby did wrong. Mother Box is too omnipotent. The writing has not been so hot. The characterization has been pretty spotty. Those are things that I'll try and straighten out."

But again, in that case, I was just a cog in the machine. I try to be a good cog.

I never took a strip and just did it, because, if my name was going to be on it, I wanted people to say, "Yeah, it was good, the guy wrote a good story, the strip was good."

But I have no problems with the concept of people taking things over. I wish that the stuff didn't have to fall off. I wish I could still read *Dr. Strange*, but it doesn't interest me anymore. And I don't say that because I'm irreplaceable. It's just that they didn't replace me with the right people.

DAVE: Do you view Dr. Strange as being magical or mystical?

STEVE: Magical. Mystical, to me, is sitting back and contemplating the universe without action. Magical is doing something about it. Mystical is meditation and drugs and stuff, simply for the experience. Magical is the guy who will go out and use his power to fight.

DAVE: How would you distinguish Johnny Thunder's Thunderbolt from Dr. Strange?

YOUR MOTHER BOX HAS LED YOU TRULY! WE DO AWAIT YOU INSIDE THE MINE!
YOU COULD POSSIBLY PRESS ONWARD THROUGH OUR REMAINING DEFENSES WITHOUT LOSING YOUR LIFE--
BUT I PROMISE YOU, YOU WOULD LOSE YOUR WIFE!
WHAT DO YOU WANT, GRANNY?
REMOVE THAT DAMNABLE BOX! ENTER THE MINE WITHOUT IT--AND YOU MAY NEGOTIATE BARDA'S RELEASE!
ALL RIGHT! I'LL DO AS YOU ASK!
WAIT--!! HEY!
NO, SCOTT! IT'S A TRAP!
OF COURSE IT'S A TRAP, OBERON--BUT I MAKE MY LIVING ESCAPING TRAPS, REMEMBER?
PING PING
BESIDES, I HAVE NO CHOICE!
MOTHER BOX--! WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER FOR SO MANY MONTHS--
--EVER SINCE MIMON RISKED HIS LIFE TO SHOW ME...MY TRUE SELF! *
* MM #9.
YOU TAUGHT ME--TO BE A GOD! YOU SHOWED ME HOW TO TRIUMPH OVER ANY OBSTACLE--ANY TRAP!
PING PING PING
YOU CONTROLLED MY LIFE--AND I ALLOWED IT GLADLY, FOR YOUR POWER SPRINGS DIRECTLY FROM THE SOURCE! I LOVED YOU --AND YOU LOVED ME!
BUT NOW I LOVE BARDA, TOO--IN ANOTHER WAY--
--AND SO, I PRAY I'VE LEARNED YOUR LESSONS WELL!
MISTER MIRACLE NOW STANDS ON HIS OWN!

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Scott Free cuts the apron strings in issue 19 of *Mister Miracle*.

"...The old Marvel Comics has very little to do with the current Marvel Comics. The system I came in under said, 'We're creating an art form here. And we're doing it better every month...'"

STEVE: Well, I guess I'd say the Thunderbolt was supernatural. Magic to me is an active sort of thing. Johnny Thunder's Thunderbolt is active, but Johnny Thunder isn't. So. The Thunderbolt, I suppose, you could say was magical, but the whole set-up, I would say, is supernatural. I wouldn't say mystical.

It's sort of splitting hairs. You know, it's all in the same realm.

DAVE: There seems to be two basic types of magicians in comics. One is a superhero, who, as you scripted Dr. Strange when you did the *Defenders*, shoots rays out of his hands, and there's the other type, who conjures and meditates and calls upon the *Hoary Hosts of Hoggarth*. And it seems to me they're two different things. One is a magic power but in a physical kind of a sense, while the other one seems to emanate power from the mind or the soul.

STEVE: Well, as I tried to explain toward the end of my tenure on *Dr. Strange*—when I did the Dr. Strange goes to Hell sequence—magical power comes from the mind. I put this in a letter column once.

It's not like the Hulk, who's always strong. Dr. Strange, if he's got a cold, is not as strong. If he's distracted, feeling depressed, all that kind of stuff, he can't muster enough energy. On the other hand, if he's really feeling good, there's really very little limit to what he can do.

That was the thing that I know Marvel really objected to. They wanted more limits on the guy. But to me, it depends on the state of his mind. So that's why Strange meditated *and* shot rays out of his palms.

DAVE: You seem to have a penchant for taking a series that's run for 20 years, and resolving all the conflicts that have arisen over the years within a single issue.

STEVE: Well, I don't like things staying the same. I was taught by the old Marvel Comics. The old Marvel Comics has got very little to do with the current Marvel Comics. And the system that I came in under said, "We're creating an art form here. And we're doing it better every month than we did last month. We're continually progressing."

IN THAT INSTANT, DR. STRANGE TOPPLES TOWARD MADNESS!
WHAT--WHAT IS THIS I FEEL--?
I SENSE--CONCERN--
--FOR ME!
STABILITY--BACKING--!
IT IS--LORD MYKRR AND RAMA KALIPH--
--PRAYING FOR MY SOUL!
AND YET...
ALL AT ONCE, HIS SHOULDERS NO LONGER STOOD?
I DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT YOU! THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT!
THAT IS WHAT'S KEEPING ME HERE!
I'M CHAINED HERE, LUCIFER! WITH CLEA, AND MANDARIN! NOW!
LIKE HELL, SORCERER! YOU CAN'T LEAVE ME!
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHICH WAY IS UP!
BEELZABUB IS THE PRINCE OF LIES! I SEE IT NOW!
WHAT IS THIS, THEN? AN EXORCISM--PERHAPS IN CONCERT WITH YOUR FOREIGN FRIENDS ON THE SURFACE?
OH YES--I KNOW ALL ABOUT THEM! THEIR EFFORT IS FUTILE!
IMAGINE TRYING TO AFFECT THE DEVIL IN HIS OWN DOMAIN!
DOCTOR?
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So, everytime I took over a series, I would go back and I'd read what had gone before, and I would take notes about unresolved plot lines, things that had been left to be resolved at some point in the future, things I didn't like, and so forth, and I would try to tie them all together.

I always wanted to get things moving, so what I usually did when I'd take over a series was kind of sum up where we were, make a real clear statement what it was all about, set up plot lines and get going on them.

I didn't want to take six months of killing time while I figured it out: I wanted to get going now.

DAVE: You mentioned the old Marvel. One always had the impression from the letter columns, and from seeing the people that worked at Marvel, that a lot of young people, particularly writers, came in around the middle 1970s. Did you sense then that you were working in something that was exploding?

STEVE: Yes. We were the third generation. The way I look at it, Marvel Comics

NOT UNLESS A BUBBLE!
DORMAMMU'S DEMONS!
REMEMBER THIS, CLEA! IF YOU NEVER LEARN ANOTHER THING FROM ME, REMEMBER THIS--
WE ARE FREE! WE ARE BACK ON EARTH!
--THE EVIL ONE EXISTS ONLY IF YOU ALLOW HIM TO!
STEPHEN, WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU MEAN--NONE OF THAT WAS REAL?
IT'S UNREAL, ALL RIGHT! IT COULDN'T BE MORE REAL--
--IF YOU BELIEVE LUCIFER'S LIES!
I BELIEVED THEM! HELL WAS SUCH A LOGICAL DEVELOPMENT, AFTER WHAT I'D SEEN THROUGH--
--HAVING MY SELF-CONFIDENCE SHATTERED WHEN I FAILED TO SAVE THE WORLD!
I HAD PLENTY OF THINGS TO BLAME FOR IT: DRACULA, MAGIC, MANDARIN,
...YOU...
...AND FINALLY, THE DEVIL HIMSELF!
AND SATAN WAS QUICK TO KEEP TELLING ME HOW WORTHLESS AND LOST I WAS!
BUT I WAS LOSING THIS FORREST IN THE TREES! THE ANSWER, IN FACT, LAY WITH ME!
I WAS THE ONE WHO INSISTED ON SEEING EVERYTHING EXACTLY, EVEN WHILE THE WORLD ROLLED ON AS BRIGHT AS EVER! ONE FAILURE LED TO ANOTHER, UNTIL I FINALLY, DELIVER US TO HELL!
I NEARLY LOST ALL MY ABILITIES, FOREVER-- BUT ANYTIME AND ARAMA AMAHM SHOWED ME THE LIGHT! NOT THEIR UNAVAILING SORCERY-- BUT THEIR CONTINUED FRIENDSHIP, AND HOPE FOR ME!
NONE OF US IS A GOD-- NOT EVEN A MAGICIAN! WE MUST ALL FACE LIMITATIONS AND FAILURES! BUT IF WE LOOK BEYOND THE BARRIERS, AND HELP EACH OTHER WHEN THE EVERYDAY MESS FALLS--
THE THING WAS, I COULD DELIVER US FROM HELL THE SAME WAY! MY POWER WAS NEVER WEAKENED-- ONLY MY ABILITY TO USE IT!
--NONE OF US NEED EVER ENTER HELL AGAIN!
THE FATE OF JAMES MANDARIN! A WOLVERINE ADVENTURE! AND--
THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF AMERICA!

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"...Magical power comes from the mind" —Dr. Strange uses his to defeat satan in *Dr. Strange* 16

has gone through four phases: Stan Lee from '62–'67; Roy Thomas from '67–'72; a third phase from '72–'76; and the fourth phase from '77 to the present.

In my opinion, I was the best of the lot that came through. There was a whole group of us, Gerber, McGregor, Wein, Wolfman, Starlin, Brunner, Chaykin, Gulacy (who came in later), Jeff Jones, Al Weiss, and Barry Smith. We were the guys who had come of age while Marvel was really kicking into gear, and we had all said we want to do this.

The fourth phase, to me, is like the decay period. I don't think that after '76, when a lot of us left, that much has been going on since then.

But it was a bullpen in those days. I went to work there in 1971, as an assistant editor, as I mentioned before. In the small offices that existed, there was me, Johnny Romita, Herb Trimpe, Marie Severin, Morrie Kuramoto, Holly Resnik, John Verpoorten, Roy Thomas and Stan Lee.

We were the bullpen. We told jokes. We talked all day long. We discussed TV programs. It was real loose. It was real friendly. And it was a group of people who were putting out comic books.

Then they moved into new offices and turned it into a business . . .a corporation.

"...Then [Marvel] moved into new offices and turned it into a business...a corporation. All that spontaneity and freedom has been both bred out and kicked out..."

People got shifted apart, closed in, and it was sort of the beginning of the process which has led to the general dullness in comics today.

All that spontaneity and freedom has been both bred out and kicked out. Driven out. And there's a noticeably big difference.

I told Jo Duffy last week how the system used to operate and she was amazed. I was amazed that she was amazed, because not only had she never heard it, but she couldn't even conceive of it.

What we used to do...the way it worked, was, "they" said, "All right, this series is yours. If you're no good at it, we'll take you off it." But otherwise they left you alone.

So every month I would come up with a plot for whatever series it might be, I would mail it to the artist, he would draw it and mail it to me, I would write it and mail it to the letterer, he would mail it to the inker and the inker would mail it to the office, where they would see it for the first time. They would make a few corrections, because there were never more than a few corrections needed, and it would go out of the house.

Today, each one of those steps requires going through the office to get looked at and edited.

And Jo had never heard of this, you know, because her whole orientation is with the newer Marvel, where everything has to come through the office.

I think you pay a price for that in that the people today seem, to me, to figure, "Well, I don't have to really think this through because somebody down the line will take care of it." It makes you lazy, and if you're made lazy you're not going to be thinking of these wild story lines.

I know that they specifically are discouraging wild story lines. They want it to fit into this format now, which is a 180° turnaround from as recently as 1973/1974. A totally different operation.

Back then, it was just fun. It was open. But that whole crew of us who came in then were sort of the last. We were the

camel machines by throwing a rope around their legs. It's been done a hundred times in comics. It's just that there's energy there. There's no energy in comics these days. And that's the difference.

Even though Lucas is going back, he's doing it well. Whereas the people who are putting out comics today, generally they're going back and not doing it particularly well. And then you can still turn around and find plenty of examples of people who are doing things that have never been seen before.

The spirit of the times certainly moves people, but that doesn't mean that in the '50s everybody has to become a fascist or

"...The spirit of the times certainly moves people, but that doesn't mean that in the '50s everybody has to become a fascist or that in the '70s everybody has to become a disco-mindless baboon..."

culmination of all that because the people who came in after us have not had as much interest in it.

The people who came in afterwards seem to me like they want to "do" Marvel Comics, rather than "make" Marvel Comics. They want to do what it's always been. Therefore, you start setting your sights lower, and you start getting lower marks, and it just fades off.

DAVE: Couldn't that also be looked at as a reflection of the attitude of the decade? In the '60s, everything was counter to whatever you had before. You experimented, and blindly cast out whatever you didn't care for, while in the '70s, we were going back to "Well, if it works..."

STEVE: It *is* the spirit of the times. But on the other hand, there are plenty of people who are doing new and different things.

I mean, the fact that most people follow the spirit of the times doesn't negate the fact that George Lucas is doing a hell of a *Star Wars* series. And there's nothing in *Star Wars* that any comic book reader hasn't seen before. The thing is you've never seen it like that, with that much energy behind it.

Nothing in *The Empire Strikes Back* surprises you, like tripping up those that in the '70s everybody has to become a disco-mindless baboon.

People should be individuals, particularly if you're in a field that's supposed to be using creative talent. You should be operating out of yourself.

DAVE: Could one of the reasons for this be that the middle '70s really had one editor, trying to oversee several dozen books, and now you essentially have a dozen or more editors overseeing the same amount of books?

STEVE: Yeah. The only person in charge is (Jim) Shooter, and he can't really ride herd on seven editors and seven assistant editors.

Everybody has his own little kingdom, and there are all the petty jealousies that that engenders. And also that kind of laxity again.

It's like, you don't want somebody screwing up one of your characters, so you won't screw up one of their characters. So in the end, nobody does anything. Obviously, any creative enterprise, from Ford Motor Cars to whatever, if it's going to really go somewhere, has to come out of a single individual's creative vision. In this case, it was Stan Lee who was able to pass that on unencumbered to Roy Thomas who was able to pass that on only slightly encumbered to the three or four people who followed him, up until Gerry Conway was the editor. It was an unbroken line of single editors overseeing the whole thing.

After that, they began to turn into what National (DC) used to be. Which was just astounding because when we worked in the old days, the old Marvel, we used to laugh at National. I mean National didn't have the slightest clue of how to do comic books in those times.

In the old bullpen, when we'd tell jokes, a lot of them were about these awful comics that National was putting out and totally missing the mark in terms of what people wanted to see.

Why Marvel Comics would then want to turn into that, you know, is beyond me, but it's an indisputable fact that they did.

DAVE: Let's get back to your fondness for tying up loose ends in a series. When you would make a major change in the heretofore undiscovered history of a character, did that have to go all the way up the line to someone like Stan or Roy, or was that considered part of your character and no big change?

STEVE: When they said to you, "Do Captain America," it was up to you to do Captain America. Nobody wanted to take the time to re-write your work. I mean, if the guy couldn't write it right the first

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DAVE: When you did the *Captain America* series in which we discovered there was a second Captain America during the 1950s fighting the Communists so we could all sleep safely at night, did you envision this as merely a piece of his history, or was this in a sense a whole new character you were creating?

STEVE: The idea for that came from Roy Thomas. When I took the series over, Roy said that he had had this idea for *Captain America* for quite awhile: that there had been a Captain America in the '50s. That's all that I got, but it started with him.

"...When I first began to script JLA, I was real sensitive about turning the Black Canary into the Scarlet Witch or that Thor would become Superman, and Iron Man would be the Batman..."

time, fire him and get somebody who could. That was the attitude. You kind of had to prove yourself.

When I was doing *The Avengers* and *The Defenders* and I wanted to do that crossover. I remembered all the wonderful summer specials that had existed. That in the summer, you'd get the *Fantastic Four Annual* and *Spider-Man Annual*. I always loved that.

That summer, they weren't putting out annuals so I said, "I want to do this thing." And they said, "Well, it doesn't sound like a real good idea to us." I mean, I'd only been writing for about nine months, so I did have to clear things. They said, "It doesn't sound like a real good idea, but what the hell?"

Again, that was the attitude. Nobody was going to tell me definitely no. Why not try it and see? So I did try it, and it sold real well and was real popular and that kind of proved me.

After that they said, "Well, you know, the guy has weird ideas but they pay off, so what the hell." And so, later, when I wanted to write *Captain America* for eight months with no Captain America in it, I really didn't have to fight too hard for that. I said "I could do it." And they said, "We believe you." As I say, it's different now.

So as you know, he later went back and tried to tie all that stuff together with The Invaders. I took that idea and developed it into the four part thing that it became, and fit it into the legend as it stood at the time.

Now, there's more parts to the legend, so it's a little harder to put it all together, but then, it was supposed to be new. It was supposed to be real. It was a new addition to the chronology of the character.

DAVE: Having worked on both *The Avengers* and *The Defenders*, would you say they are conceptually the same, with different powers and costumes?

STEVE: No. I did *The Justice League* too, and they're all different. That's what you find in a group. Everybody is different. Every single character, and every group of characters, has its own contribution to group dynamics.

I was writing *The Avengers* and *The Defenders*, and I thought that I had *The Defenders* really under control, and didn't think that I was doing a very good job on *The Avengers*. Having to follow Roy was a tough act, and I really wasn't satisfied with what I was doing. So I dropped *The Defenders*, because I had done them right and I wanted the challenge of getting *The Avengers* right.

I'd done *The Avengers* for so long that when I first began to script *JLA*, I was real sensitive about turning the Scarlet Witch into the Black Canary, and that Thor would become Superman, and Iron Man would be the Batman, that kind of thing. I didn't want to do that. I tried real hard. I went back and looked at all the DC characters, and figured out not only who they were, but who I thought they should be, because they'd been pretty cardboard for a long time.

My Justice League didn't sound like my Avengers, I don't think, because they reacted differently to a challenge. You can set up a menace, but if you really have your head into the different people, they're going to react differently and it's going to create a different story.

Stan used to say that the stories wrote themselves, and in a large sense that's true. You can't really make a character do what he wouldn't do, if you're really sensitive to who and what he's supposed to be.

DAVE: How did you end up moving from Marvel to DC?

STEVE: Well, I went to work for *Marvel* in 1971. In '73 they were bought by a conglomerate, and in '74 we began to really feel that.

(continued on page 72)

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN

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THE INEVITABLE QUESTION-

WHO IS

by Richard Bensam

Chances are, even if you are not a viewer of one of the 65 television stations which currently air episodes of *DOCTOR WHO*, and even if you have not seen the novelizations of his adventures being published in the United States by Pinnacle Books, you have still heard of *DOCTOR WHO*. It is unavoidable. You may have seen articles which have appeared in various science-fiction magazines. You might have seen pictures of an odd-looking man with curly brown hair and an almost comical wide-brimmed hat. You may only know that *DOCTOR WHO* is the name of a British television series. Or you might have just heard the name. But you have heard of him.

That the *DOCTOR WHO* series is as well known as it is in this county despite its inherent unfamiliarity and strangeness to American viewers, makes it a unique phenomenon. Followers of the good Doctor seem never to be content with merely watching and enjoying the show themselves; they fell compelled to introduce others to the wonders of the Doctor. These "converts" inevitably go on to introduce others, and so on. If there is any problem with DOCTOR WHO, it is that, for American viewers, such "introduction" is often necessary. *DOCTOR WHO* is completely unique in television history . . . there has never been anything remotely like it. Often, there is quite a lot which has to be explained!

One of the most remarkable things about the series is its longevity. The first half-hour episode of DOCTOR WHO was aired on the BBC network in England on a Saturday afternoon: November 23, 1963! This is a television series in production for *17 years* running . . . with no end in sight. Anyone born on that Saturday will be in High School now. British children who saw that first episode are adults by now, possibly with children of their own!

The current Doctor Who, played by Tom Baker.

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This longevity leads to some problems for American viewers, because *so much* has been established in that time. The British audience is intimately familiar with it all, which is not surprising, considering that the BBC has calculated that a minimum of *ten million people* watch each weekly episode. British news programs report changes in the show's cast as a big news item. A British comedian need only make a reference to the TARDIS or the Daleks, and he is rewarded with applause. TARDIS? Daleks? We've missed an awful lot here in the States—and our confusion is only increased by the fact that the episodes which were purchased by Time-Life Television for syndication in America are only the latter third of the entire series . . .featuring the **fourth** actor to portray the Doctor, Tom Baker.

Yes, four different actors have played the Doctor. Over the course of 17 years, three new "Doctors" have had to be discovered. The method that producer Barry Letts devised to make these changes feasible is unique in television history. In the event of mortal injury, the Doctor is able to completely regenerate himself and so is virtually immortal. However this regeneration is often a haphazard affair, and a regenerated Time Lord may wind up with a new mind and body, due to the scrambling inherent in the process. Thus, a new actor with a totally different interpretation of the character can become the Doctor without violating the precepts of the series.

WHO IS THE DOCTOR?

He is known only as "the Doctor", although he once explained that the title is "purely honorary". He is a Time Lord, a member of that immensely wise and powerful race of alien beings, who for countless millenia have observed and studied all Time and Space. From their home on the planet Gallifrey, whose very existence is concealed from the rest of the Universe, they follow all that transpires throughout the universe, gathering information for its own sake. Their virtual worship of knowledge and reason led the Time Lords to achieve one of the highest levels of scientific advancement ever reached by intelligent beings. However, one of the tenets of their philosophy was to never interfere in the affairs of alien races, but to merely watch and wait

pears in our dimension, like the tip of an iceberg. The greater portion sits in interdimensional space, where it can occupy an infinite area. If needed the occupant can build a new section onto the TARDIS. The Time Lords may travel unobtrusively because of a chameleon device in the Tardis which allows it to blend in with its surroundings.

Unfortunately, the TARDIS stolen from his fellow Time Lords by the Doctor was taken from a Gallifrian repair shop. The shape-changing mechanism was faulty, and became permanently jammed during a visit to 20th Century Earth, trapping the Doctor's TARDIS in the form of a virtually extinct blue London police box.

The purloined TARDIS also required the repair of its steering orientation. Although able to travel through time and

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The changing of the guard: a rare publicity photo of three of the actors who have portrayed the Doctor. Left-to-right: Patrick Troughton, Jon Pertwee and William Hartnell.

But one of the Time Lords found such inaction intolerable. As he studied the interplay of great forces in the cosmos: the interminable wars and invasions, the entropic conflict betwen Good and Evil, the rights and lives of a thousand alien lifeforms debased and brutalized, the wrongs left unrighted, he was overcome by the compulsion to *act*! He was a renegade among the Time Lords, a misfit in the name of justice.

And so he stole a TARDIS and fled.

The TARDIS! The name is an acronym for *T*ime *A*nd *R*elative *D*imensions *I*n *S*pace. The TARDIS is an extraordinary vehicle capable of spanning the time-lines and traversing all known and unknown space. It is described by the Doctor as being "dimensionally transcendental," or bigger on the inside than the outside. Only a small portion of the TARDIS ap-

space, the TARDIS tends to be erratic, not necessarily landing where the Doctor intends it to, which adds to the unpredictability of the situations in which the Doctor finds himself.

In spite of these setbacks, the Doctor sets out to accomplish what he first intended: to experience life directly, and help the beings he encounters along the way with his abilities and knowledge. In the process, he makes many friends and some of these join him in his travels. The Doctor is delighted by companionship, and always extends hospitality to any who share his interest in exploration and adventure.

The Doctor, as portrayed by his current "alter ego," Tom Baker, is a very unorthodox hero-figure. He is appropriately tall and sharp-featured, his hair is a mop of brown curls, and he is full of bubbling,

eccentric, vitality. He possesses a mischievous, camp-like humor. His unconventional dress (he wears a wide-brimmed hat and a multi-colored scarf which trails along the ground behind him, over a velvet frockcoat and tweed trousers) causes him to stand out wherever he goes.

He seems to behave as if deranged. He will frequently stop in the middle of a sentence to stare wide-eyed out into space, lost in thought, and then resume speaking afer several minutes have passed, as if nothing has happened. When threatened with death by a group of hostile warriors, he smiles and offers the leader a candy from his ever-present bag of jellybabies. Are these the actions of a sane being?

Indeed they are. While the Doctor appears to be a strange mixture of genius and clown, hero and buffoon, he is not in the least bit schizoid. He takes his belief in freedom and the rights of living beings very seriously. He is impulsive, idealistic, and ready to risk his life for a worthy cause. He hates tyranny and oppression. Further, he loathes pomposity and pretension, and always seeks to deflate those who possess such traits. The oddness of his apparel and his refusal to acknowledge an insult or a threat is his way of fighting. He will never use force or bullying as a weapon

THE GOOD COMPANIONS

Make no mistake about it, *DOCTOR WHO* is no mere adventure show. After all many science-fiction heroes find themselves battling alien invaders, superstitious warriors and dinosaurs. And while the Doctor's adversaries may be particularly imaginative and unusual, this can't account for the unparalleled success of *DOCTOR WHO*. *DOCTOR WHO* is a show about *people*.

As independent as the Doctor is, he still needs companionship. Over the years, he has hosted in the TARDIS a wide variety of friends and associates, most of them from the planet Earth These traveling companions provided the audience with a point of identification in the Doctor's strange adventures and a human perspective on the actions of the Doctor.

When the series opened, the Doctor was traveling with a fifteen-year-old girl named Susan, who attended a London school. (Note that *DOCTOR WHO* was originally intended as a children's serial, hence the creation of a character for the target audience to identify with.) Two of her teachers, Ian and Barbara, sought to

investigate her mysterious home life... and found themselves caught in a TARDIS voyage to the Stone Age. Other travellers who accompanied the Doctor included Vicki (a survivor of a crashed spaceship), Steven (a space pilot), Ben (a cockney sailor), and Polly (a scientist's secretary). The second incarnation of the Doctor added to this list of companions Jamie (a tough young Highlander picked up during the Jacobite Rebellion), Victoria (the daughter of a 19th Century professor), and Zoe (a computer operator from a space station).

Not all these companions were in the TARDIS at one and the same time of course, though they often overlapped, particularly in the early episodes. It's just as well that the TARDIS was "dimensionally transcendental," or it would have been uncomfortably crowded in there at times!

Fortunately, from time to time people left the Doctor's "crew." The Doctor actually managed to get some of them back to where they had started from. Others decided for various reasons to leave the TARDIS behind and settle down, though not always in the time or even on the planet from which they'd originated. Susan, the Doctor's "granddaughter," grew up and married a young freedom fighter after the Dalek invasion of Earth in the late 22nd Century. Victoria was adopted by a childless couple in a scientific age long after her own Victorian times.

Jamie and Zoe, the last two companions of the Doctor's second life, may have been the most fortunate of all. They were returned to their places and times by the Time Lords after the Doctor's trial before the High Court, and so were able to take up their original lives again.

When the newly regenerated Doctor was exiled to Earth, the number of his associates became fewer and more stable. He fell in with the *U*nited *N*ations *I*ntelligence *T*askforce (U.N.I.T.). Eventually, he became their scientific adviser, and a friend of the Commanding Officer of the British division, Brigadier Alastair Lethbridge-Stewart. Also working with U.N.I.T. was Liz Shaw, a Cambridge scientist who finally left to continue her research work.

After that, the Doctor's assistant was the diminutive, short-sighted Jo Grant. Once the Time Lords allowed the Doctor to continue on his journey, she accompanied him on a few trips in the TARDIS. Jo eventually married a brilliant young scientist and went off on an expedition up the Amazon with him.

Many of the female companions up to this point were Fay Wray types, prone to screaming and fainting. But after the Women's Movement of the early 70's popularized the image of the independent career woman, *DOCTOR WHO* adapted with the times. Enter Sarah Jane Smith, freelance journalist.

Smith, portrayed by Elisabeth Sladen, meets the Doctor before the end of his third incarnation. Originally, she suspected that this strange man with a police box in his room was responsible for the disappearance of several prominent scientists and so she unwittingly became a stowaway aboard the TARDIS (see *"Dr. Who and The Time Warrior"*). When she found herself back in Medieval England, an astounded Sarah soon developed a deep respect for the Time Lord, and accepted his invitation to travel further in the TARDIS. She remained with him after his regeneration into the fourth Doctor.

They were joined briefly by Doctor Harry Sullivan of U.N.I.T., who was drawn into several adventures completely by accident. Although he accepted the situations he found himself in, he was just as happy to remain behind when the Doctor and Sarah left Earth after defeating the menace of the Zygons (*"Doctor Who and the Terror of the Zygons"*).

Sarah remained in the company of the Doctor for three seasons , but she was forced to leave when the Doctor was called back to Gallifrey. She was succeeded by a completely different companion, a primitive of an alien world named Leela: *"Doctor Who and the Face of Evil"* introduces Louise Jameson as the knife-wielding member of the Sevateem tribe. The Sevateem tribe are descendants of an exploratory survey team from Earth which met with disaster. Leela, feeling out of place among her own kind, invited herself aboard the TARDIS, after helping the Doctor to set her people back on the proper developmental course.

Now somewhat civilized, Leela leaves the Doctor after a harrowing adventure on Gallifrey and marries Captain Andred, with whom she has fallen in love. But the Doctor still has K-9, a mobile computer unit (who resembles his namesake) picked up from an earlier adventure. K-9 trundles after the Time Lord like an obedient dog, offering instant data and constant annoyance as he defeats the Doctor in still another game of chess.

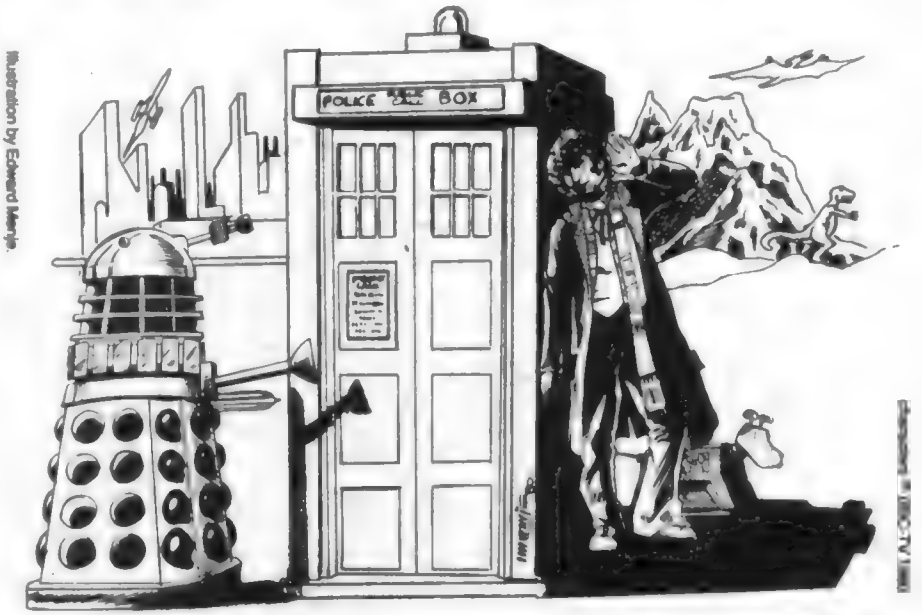

Illustration by Edward Marsh

THE APPEAL OF DOCTOR WHO

Of course, the company that he keeps is not the sole factor in the Time Lord's popularity. There are many other factors to be considered. One element must be his arch-foes and the incredible alien monsters he battles in his adventures. They seem endless in their variety: the Vardans, the Oracle, the ancient Fendahl, the virus swarm of the Purpose, the Master, the Tong of the Black Scorpion in Victorian England (a favorite time period in the series), the evil Morbius, the mysterious energy form known as the Mandragora Helix, the android clone Kraals, the Zygons, the Cybermen, the Ice Warriors, the Autons, the spore beast called the Krynoid, and most deadly and menacing of them all, the utterly evil mechanized threat of the Daleks.

Visual effects designer for the series Mat Irvine says, "*Besides the Doctor, the Daleks are DOCTOR WHO.*" Created by the mad Kaled scientist Davros (and author Terry Nation) these malignant creatures, in their pepper-pot shaped travel machines, have built up an intergalactic empire whose sole aim is to destroy humanoid life. The Daleks have become so popular in England that two movies were made featuring them. Dalek toys, coloring books, candies, soaps, slippers, easter eggs, and even special Dalek fireworks have all been marketed successfully. It sometimes seems as if the vile Daleks are more popular than the Doctor himself!

But even such imaginative foes cannot explain the phenomenal popularity of *DOCTOR WHO*. *DOCTOR WHO* is not an adventure show, it is a people show. The regular characters are a main attraction, but ultimately, the attraction of *DOCTOR WHO* is the Doctor himself. Like Sherlock Holmes, Tarzan, and Superman, the Doctor seems to have a universal appeal.

THE MANY FACES OF THE DOCTOR

When the series began in 1963, *DOCTOR WHO* featured a very different Doctor from the one we see today. His past was a complete mystery. As portrayed by former stage actor William Hartnell, he appeared to be somewhere in his sixties, slightly stiff, but still vigorous and alert—a sort of grandfather figure. Sydney Newman, then Head of Drama at the BBC, described the character as "a crotchety old man, about 745 years old." His frockcoat, check trousers, and high stiff collar made him resemble some sort of eccentric Victorian professor. Traveling with a young girl named Susan who called him "Grandfather," this familiar, lovable old figure led the Doctor to immense popularity.

Although still very active, with the same great appetite for knowledge that all incarnations of the Doctor share, this first Doctor showed signs of great aging. He sometimes became irritable and impatient with those whose intelligence didn't match his own. He was capable of a kind of childish secretiveness and selfishness. In an early adventure, he was shown endangering the lives of his companions by deliberately sabotaging his own TARDIS, because he wished to stay and explore a dangerous alien planet. Hartnell utilized his experience as a character actor to add an extra dimension to the character. Though *DOCTOR WHO* was intended as merely a children's show, such careful thought helped it to evolve into much more.

William Hartnell continued his successful portrayal of the aged Doctor for more than three years, but was finally forced to retire for health reasons. Just before the end of the 1965/66 season, the producers of the show were left with no choice but to find a substitute, which seemed impossible. Ulitmately, it was decided that rather than attempt to reproduce Hartnell's tenure on the series (which could have proved disastrous), a completely *new* Doctor would be introduced. And even as the search for a replacement commenced, a scheme was being developed to cover the transition . . .

At the end of an adventure with the terrible Cybermen, the Doctor casually announced that his old body was beginning to "wear out." He collapsed into a coma, and his companions (and the viewing audience) saw him begin to change . . .and when he recovered at the beginning of the following episode, he was literally a different man.

For a start, he looked much younger. Moreover, his temperament had changed with his appearance. *This* Doctor was a strange, elusive character, gentle and wayward with a whimsical charm. The arrogance of his previous incarnation had vanished and he was modest and unassuming. His clothes became more extravagant, he played the flute, and sometimes he wore odd hats. But beneath this clownish exterior, the Doctor's brilliant mind and forceful personality were unchanged, indicating that this *was* essentially, the same man. In the adventures that followed, this odd-looking little fellow successfully thwarted many crises.

Patrick Troughton's portrayal of the reincarnated Doctor has often been characterized as a "cosmic hobo." His frankly whimsical attitude was a result of the decision that the new Doctor should not be a replica of the original. It was Sydney Newman of the BBC who again provided the key to the Doctor's character, for he suggested that Troughton might try playing the character "like Charlie Chaplin," in striking contrast to Hartnell's performance. It proved unbelievably successful.

The Doctor retained this form for many adventures. Then, at last, he encountered

Counterclockwise from upper left. On the planet Voga, two Cybermen, android warriors, search for flesh-and-bloods to kill; In "The Android Invasion" the Doctor gets caught in an alien death trap. No, this is *not* a left-over Jack Nicholson still from last issue's review of "The Shining." Actually, it is a mutated astronaut who menaces a scientific expedition on "The Planet of Evil"; the Doctor and reporter Sarah Jane Smith (Elizabeth Sladen). The Doctor is trapped between a headache and a shape-changing Zygon invader in "The Terror of the Zygons"; In "The Robots of Death," the Doctor must discover who has reprogrammed the worker androids of a deep space mining colony to kill their human operators.

all photos copyright BBC-TV 1988

a group of alien War Lords, who were attempting a Galactic conspiracy of conquest which the Doctor failed to defeat. He was left with no other alternative than making contact with the rigidly aristocratic High Council of the Time Lords, rulers of his homeworld Gallifrey. It was then that the Doctor's status as a rebel and renegade was uncovered. He decided that recapture was a price he was willing to pay, if he could only convince his people to intervene in this greatest of cosmic menaces.

The conspiracy of the War Lords was frustrated, and as expected, the Doctor was captured and put on trial before the High Court. Unrepentant, he made a moving speech before his fellow Time Lords, claiming that it was the moral duty of the Time Lords to help the weak and oppressed, to use their powers to struggle against evil as he had done.

Ultimately, the Doctor was found guilty of theft and treason by the High Court, and exiled to the primitive land of 20th Century Earth. But the Doctor's plea could not have been without effect, for this period marks a time of great crisis for Earth. Immediately after his arrival, the Doctor became involved in the first alien invasion of Earth by the android Autons. Many more alien menaces were to follow.

As part of the Doctor's sentence, the Time Lords apparently decided that he undergo yet another regeneration. The Doctor who arrived on Earth was very different from the comic little rebel who had defied the Court of the Time Lords.

Jon Pertwee, who assumed the role of the Doctor in 1970, chose to play the celebrated character as an extension of himself. "The Doctor is me," he explained at the time, "or I am him." The previous Doctors had been *thinkers*, tending to leave the violent stuff to other characters in the story. Pertwee's Doctor was a man of action, always ready to tackle the villains in person. Soon this tall, elegant figure, white-haired, with the extravagant clothing and flowing cape, became firmly established as the new Doctor.

The actor's tastes affected the series in other ways. Jon Pertwee is fascinated by machines that move quickly in any element. Cars, motor-bikes, speedboats and planes dominate his life. His TARDIS-less Doctor soon acquired a souped-up Edwardian roadster known affectionately as "Bessie." In the course of his adventures, this Doctor found himself driving speedboats, hovercraft, and even a one-man helicopter.

Eventually, the Doctor was called in by his fellow Time Lords to help them cap-

ture a renegade Time Lord who was wreaking havoc on Earth and Gallifrey. In return for his assistance, the Time Lords return the use of his TARDIS. Ironically, it was this new freedom which led to the ending of his third incarnation. Riddled with deadly radiation on an alien world, the Doctor returned to his friends on Earth, apparently a doomed man. His only hope for survival rested in his ability to regenerate once more . . .

After five years, Jon Pertwee felt that the time had come to leave *DOCTOR WHO* behind. Like Patrick Troughton before him, Pertwee was wary of the dangers of typecasting. Rather than become trapped by his own success, he would leave at the height of his stay. *DOCTOR WHO* had done what no other program had ever accomplished successfully, to completely alter its lead character. Many viewers felt that John Pertwee had been the best *DOCTOR WHO* in the history of the series. Could the trick be used a *third* time?.

Tom Baker's screen credits were numerous, including his portrayal of Rasputin in *Nicholas and Alexandra* (He was recommended for the role by Sir Laurence Olivier.), and Sokurah (the villain in *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*). It was the latter which served as the screen test for his role in *DOCTOR WHO*. Producer Barry Letts and former Script Editor Terrance Dicks (author of many episodes himself) were particularly impressed with his sympathetic handling of the villainous sorceror. Baker's remarkable success in the role has justified their choice eminently. Tom Baker has literally made the part his own.

A NEW LIFE FOR DOCTOR WHO

What will be the Doctor's future, if you really can speak of the "future" of one who is travelling through time itself? The *DOCTOR WHO* series is still in production in England, and Tom Baker's seventh year as the Doctor will soon begin. Many of the Doctor's adventures which have not been shown in America (the previous three Doctors), are becoming available to us, in a slightly different form.

Target Books, a British publishing outfit, has been working with the BBC on novelizing the adventures of *DOCTOR WHO*. These books are very true to the originals, having been adapted by the writers of the television series itself. In England, over 43 separate novelizations have been released, in addition to *THE MAKING OF DOCTOR WHO*, by Terrance Dicks and Malcolm Hulke, to which this article owes much. Although not generally available in the United States, these Target novelizations can often be found at conventions and specialty shops.

Recently, Pinnacle Books has made an arrangement to release these adventures in the United States in new editions. Already out in bookstores across the country are *Doctor Who and the Day of the Daleks*, *Doctor Who and the Doomsday Weapon*, *Doctor Who and the Dinosaur Invasion*, *Doctor Who and the Genesis of the Daleks*, *Doctor Who and the Revenge of the Cybermen*, and *Doctor Who and the Loch Ness Monster*, with more on the way.

"Time is relative," is a favorite phrase of the Doctor's. After 17 years, with four different Doctors and no end in sight, it is obvious that, whether on our screens or in the Pinnacle novelizations, *DOCTOR WHO* will continue on . . . in the past, the present, and the future. ■

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Whatever Happened to . . .

Tony Isabella

by Mark Gasper

Five years ago I helped Tony Isabella put New York behind him. Unable to adjust to New York, Tony had gathered eight professional friends and myself to move him one Friday night.

So we packed away Tony's possessions into a huge truck (which was some job because, like most collectors, he is a compulsive packrat) and sent him on his way to his home town, Cleveland, Ohio.

Since then a whole slew of rumors have circulated the professional and fan circles speculating about Tony's fate. One of the most popular was the rumor that he had joined a religious commune. One imaginative variation of that rumor was that Tony had become a minister in some wild religious cult and was preaching a new Gospel throughout the Midwest. There was even a rumor that Tony had returned to comics and was using Steve Grant as an alias.

Despite the good copy and sensationalism that such a rumor would make, I am happy to report that Tony is, in his own words, "...happy in Cleveland, and on my way to becoming a conglomerate." Tony is the sole stockholder and President of "the most complete comics and science fiction store in Ohio", Cosmic Comics, which is located in the middle of downtown Cleveland. In addition to Cosmic Comics, Tony is also the President, Secretary and 50% stockholder of the Northeastern Ohio News Company which distributes comics and fanzines throughout Northeastern Ohio, as the regional distributor for New Media/Irjax. The business is constantly expanding and Tony currently employs five workers.

After working on staff for years on fanzines like *The Comic Reader* and *Comic Fandom Monthly* and at *Marvel Comics* (Where he eventually worked himself up the ladder to become the editor of *The Haunt of Horror*), Tony feels that "it's wonderful being your own boss." He has spent the last two years establishing his business and he has visited New York only once in the past three years.

Now that the business is running smoothly, Tony has begun writing again. Coming in the 24th issue of *What If* (due out in September) is the long-awaited, book-length story by Tony and Gil Kane entitled "What If Gwen Stacy Had Never Died?" Currently Tony is writing a Defenders fill-in which will be pencilled by Pat Broderick.

Tony is also creating a new character for an alternative publisher, *Voyages*, which is published by New Media/Irjax and is edited by Howard Feldman. He hasn't taken this character to the major companies because at *Voyages* he retains his copyright privileges and has a choice of what artist will draw the strip.

Yet Tony is not at all bitter about his experiences at *Marvel* or *DC*. He feels that he has matured as a person and as a businessman and that, "if we got screwed, then it was our own fault because we were too stupid to realize just how dishonest the people that employed us were." He maintains that of all his scripts he requested that his name be taken off only twice. So Tony can still say, "I am not at all down on mainstream comics."

Among many other projects that Tony is contemplating is a yearly *Best of Fandom* book. The book would concentrate on reprinting the best of the APAs (alternate press association) and small circulation fanzines with the intention of presenting an overview of fandom, each year. He feels very strongly about the project because, "Whatever happened to Tony Isabella, happened because of comics fandom." ■

If you would like to contact Tony Isabella, he may be reached at: Cosmic Comics, 22 Colonial Arcade, Cleveland, Ohio 44115.

Next Issue: Whatever Happened to . . .GARDNER FOX?

THREE DARE-DEVILS AND A WICKED EMPIRE

by
Don McGregor

Movies!

Magic!

Some have magical sights and sounds that elicit applause and cheers. These are fancies of heroisim and classic confrontations between good and evil that hark to the adventurous spirit locked and caged and subdued by daily survival and chronic cynicism.

These are views of wonder that tell us the What-can-be can triumph over the what-is.

The best of fantasy, in any medium, appeals to that desire. These stories tell us that we can be better than we are, and that the complex issues which bedevil us and oft-times leave us impotent, are, in the fantasy world, clear and precise in their dangers and intents.

George Lucas's *Star Wars* films offer that magic in Orwell's decade, the 1980's. Lucas has said in interviews that the inspiration for the *Star Wars* saga came primarily from old comic strips and earlier cinema flights of magic, from what would now be considered an errant, impoverished cousin of dubious origins . . .the weekly chapter serials of the 1930's and 1940's.

These serials were low budget films whose origins were in the silent era. One chapter was shown in the theaters each week, with a cliff-hanger ending, which didn't always have the hero or heroine hanging off a cliff. The cliff could be falling on them, or a truck would be running them down, or they might be gassed, electrocuted, guillotined, drowned. You name it! This was an inducement to get the audiences rushing back into the movie house week after week, no matter what the main feature was.

Star Wars and *The Empire Strikes Back* have phenomenal budgets in com-

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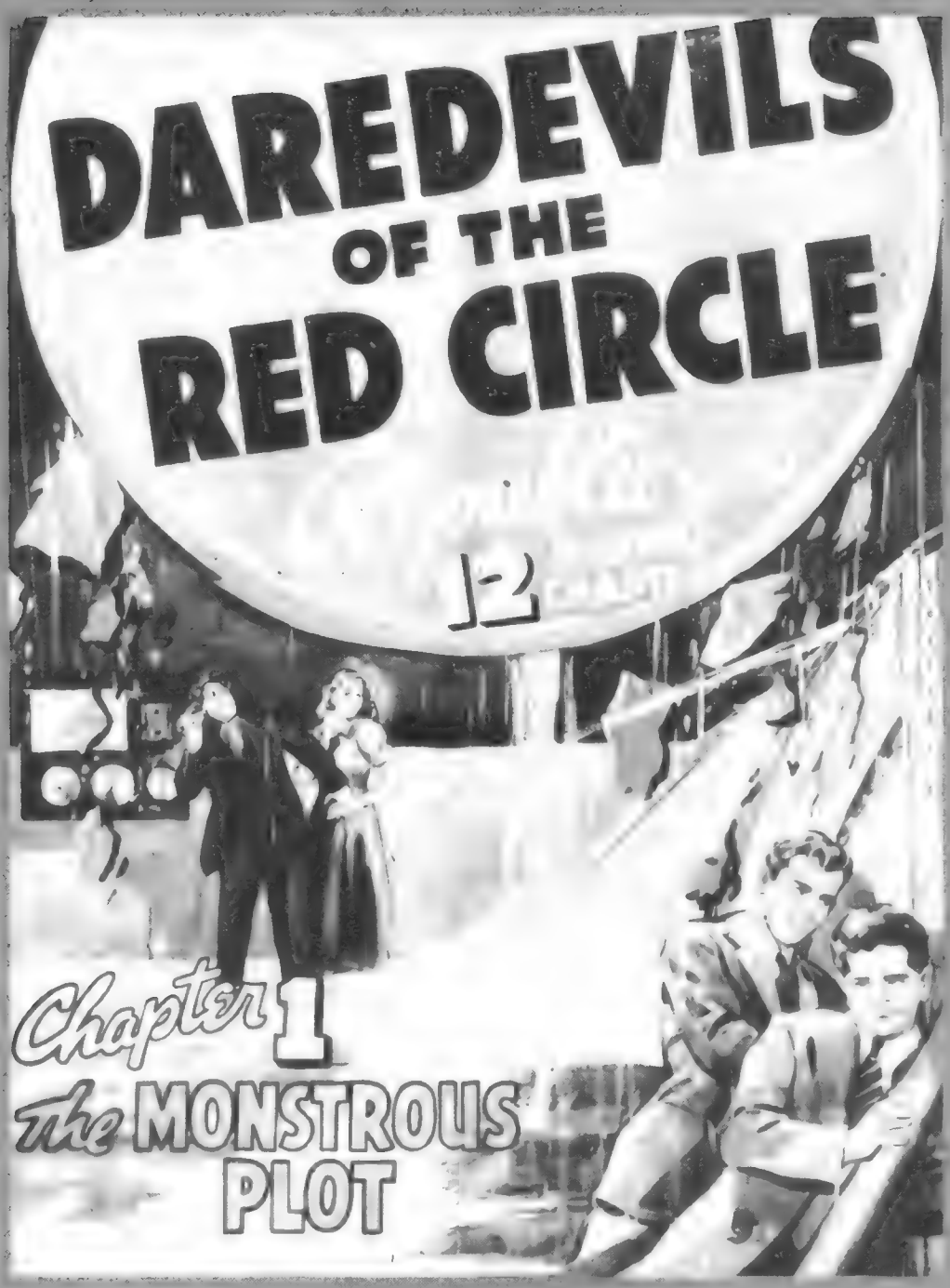


parison with these serials. The serial directors considered that they had big bucks behind them if they tipped a $100,000 budget for the entire twelve or fifteen chapters. *The Empire Strikes Back* had a budget of $22 million. The idea of having that much money at their disposal would probably have been as incomprehensible to those serial directors as the story-lines they were filming.

There is one major difference between the two, the best of the serials and the *Star Wars* epics, and it is not in terms of technical sophistication or financial backing.

I think it is in the types of magic each attempts and is successful at.

The best of the serials move like a son of a bitch, so fast that one hasn't time to question the logic of the sequence of events, except in retrospect. *The Empire Strikes Back* succeeds in emulating this frenetic pace admirably. Lucas and director Irvin Kershner have attained this break neck speed with an incredibly sure hand.

The tremendous amount of money that went into producing this film could have affected the pacing adversely. The technicians must have been tempted to dwell on their opulent sets and nifty gimmickry, and if they had, the dramatic timing and speed would have been lost.

The makers of *Star Trek, The Motion Picture*, and the remake of *King Kong* succumbed to this temptation and the films were ponderous, with little of the charm of the original inspirations.

Kershner utilizes the wipes, fades, voice overs, all the transition devices that were a staple of the superior entries in the serial field. These visual effects transport us from the ice-world of Hoth to the Imperial Star Destroyers com-

mandered by black garbed and black helmeted Darth Vader. He still breathes as if he has terminal sinusitus.

The logistics of filming such a large scale fantasy epic with a reliance on hundreds of special effects must have been a nightmare in the initial stages. The coordination factors alone among Director, Production Designer, Effects Engineers, Set Director, Mechanical Effects Men, Stop Motion Animators, Matte Painting Artists, etc. must have been staggering. If making a film is often compared to a military operation, this had to be a major assault. Animated snow creatures called Tauntauns carry Luke Skywalker and Han Solo over glacial expanses. A Medical droid named Too-Onebee, although most of his role and his name ended up on the cutting room floor when the film was edited, has eyes that glow electrically. Snowspeeders skim over the desolate, snow-swept wastes of the planet Hoth.

When I saw the original *Star Wars*, I thought it was an enjoyable film, but one without substance. It might have been more impressive if I hadn't been involved in the world of comics, where several series of SF and fantasy had visualized distant worlds and different life-forms. The best of the comics had a point of view that gave weight to the phantasmagoric events.

Alex Raymond's *Flash Gordon* had an exotic flair with an ice world more incredible than Hoth, and undersea kingdoms and citadels built in the splendor of deep forests. Mac Raboy's *Flash Gordon* trekked through lush, primeval swamplands filled with perils and derring-do. *Adam Strange*, in the comic books, travelled between two planets to romance his love, *Alanna*. Starlin's *Warlock* had a galactic stage, but the epic events were narrowly focused on themes of inherent evil, deification, death and transcendence.

The original *Star Wars* lacked any real commitment.

It was a pleasant film. Now, I do not mean that as a put-down. If more films and comics that make claim to that intent of pleasant entertainment actually did so with verve and imagination, it would be wonderful!

Unfortunately most of them don't achieve that status. As a standard, many tend to be dull, repetitive, flagrant ripoffs of other successful comics or movies. The source is not inspiration but diluted mimicry. It is a policy of incest that, particularly in the comics industry, has resulted in a mongoloid line devoid of cleverness, originality, and any humane element.

Some of the more rabid fanatics who love *Star Wars*, as if they love it more than life itself, might take offense when I state that the film was pleasant. Horrors! Blasphemy! They see this saga as nothing less than religious revolution. It isn't that! And I don't think Lucas or the rest of the people involved in making the films possible, intended for the series to be taken as such. Economically they may be pleased as punch, since it is reflected in the box office receipts. "May the Force be with you!" has become the *Star Wars* followers' mantra just as "Live Long and Prosper" was the mantra for the Trekkies.

"I find it humorous that a slash from a laser sword somehow turned Obi-Wan into a transparent voyeur . . ."

Defenders of cult films take slight at anything less than ecclesiastical homage. The term pleasant could be taken as a rejection. It isn't. I can see some volatile reaction to the quick, instant analytical extremism of television critics who either condemn a movie they don't like in the same manner that they would condemn genocide, or praise it with absurd superlatives and rank at least three movies a year as "The Best" they've ever seen!

It occurs to me, during the infrequent times that I have heard them, that they are folks who wanted to be comedians or comediennes and didn't have the talent. They can't resist the easy pun that might play off a title. They seem desperate behind the smile, and sweat streaks their make-up powder. They use badly timed, insult humor delivered flatly as part of their critical armor, in hopes of a few cheap laughs and the renewal of their contracts with the networks.

So the little Ronas and Genes smack their lips or twirl their mustaches and try to act glib and superior, but I'm not sure that has anything to do with expressing their honest feelings. Or even criticism.

I think it has something to do with Jordache jeans, but this is only a suspicion.

Star Wars had its heroes and villains, along with colorful creatures and neurotic and/or lovable robots, but the film seldom had a feeling of place as *The Empire Strikes Back* does. The sequel has glimpses of emotion a shade darker and more complex, nothing that slows down the action, of course, but it actually has revelations of character that shock and disturb as well as delight.

Curiously, in the one area where serials such as *Daredevils of the Red Circle* or *The Mysterious Dr. Satan* excelled is in the physical clash between heroes and villains, the original *Star Wars* was weak.

In effect, this weak area delineates the area of departure in the types of magic between the source of Lucas's inspiration and the films he created.

There were numerous wild melees and fisticuffs throughout these serials, with stuntmen like Davey Sharpe, Yakima Canutt, Richard Talmadge, and Tom Steele, among others, who were knocked spectacularly over balconies to crash into breakaway tables below, who swung long distances on crystal chandeliers to kick into deadly foes waiting below, who leapt from horses running hell-bent for leather onto runaway stagecoaches and then fell between the pounding hooves of the panicked horses and clung onto the wooden rigging and were dragged like rag dolls over rocks and dirt. They enlivened the best of the serials. They bounced off walls, clung onto rope ladders swaying beneath propeller driven bi-planes, and dared swim the treacherous currents near cascading waterfalls.

They must have been nuts!

They were also great!

In one serial, seen in a vaguely remembered distant time but whose title I have forgotten, I remember a western hero standing atop a rocky plateau. Halfway down the cliffside was a trail carved into rock, and a villain was racing his mount to a getaway. Now picture this, if you can. That trail is perhaps two or three stories below our hero, and it curves around a corner in the terrain. The stuntmen, doubling for the actor playing the hero, ran across the top of the plateau, in a path bisecting the angle. Below, out of his sight, but not ours, since the camera is showing us this from some distance, the villain rides around the bend. Above, the stuntman reaches the edge of the cliff.

And throws himself out into the air!

Apparently without looking to see if his foe were indeed below!

The villain was. He galloped beneath the plunging hero just in time for him to hit the villain clean (So clean!) that the man was knocked off the running horse without knocking it over. The two stuntmen then tumbled down the remaining cliffside, ass over teacups!

I don't know which serial that was from. The rest of it may have been a dog, but for one moment I could not believe what I had seen. I wanted them to run the film back and go over that action again.

Remember, these were only two human beings, made of flesh and blood and bone like the rest of us in the audience. We could not believe they had done this.

But they did!

Although they studied their craft carefully, and took great precautions, the stunt was still real. When stunts were performed during the silent movies, there was no such thing as rear projection or most of the other illusory effects created later. They were performing magic, even then, but the magic was imbued in the energy and creativity, not to mention insanity, of the stuntmen.

The stuntmen in *Star Wars* have little to do; the special effects Wizards from Lucas's Industrial Light and Magic laboratory, on the other hand, have a ball. Their mechanical magic is truly stimulating at times, in a way that some of the action sequences aren't.

For example, the climactic laser sword fight in *Star Wars* between dastardly Darth Vader and Luke's kindly mentor, Ben (Obi-Wan) Kenobi, is tame by comparison with the epic duels in the old Zorro serials. The idea of a slicing light capable of severing limbs and lives is properly chilling in concept, but its execution in the first film is tame. The fight lacks tension and vitality, and when Vader slays Ben, it should have been a moment of shock. It isn't, because the film is busy rushing toward more special effects, and the emotion is lost. There are few moments in the first film where the audience is allowed to feel much of anything beyond a few chuckles and the rush of the chase.

The Empire Strikes Back has moments of human concern, and thus has a tension that *Star Wars* lacks. When Luke Skywalker finally confronts Darth Vader in a laser sword

In chapter 10 of **Daredevils**, the villain 31013 is revealed for the creep he is, and the stuntmen hold a mutual affection reunion

Watch out guys! Richard Talmadge is about to crack your skulls after a spectacular leap. From *Pirate Treasure*.

showdown, the deadly lights arc and cut the air in vicious combat. The threat becomes tangible. A sense of destiny is achieved that the first film lacks.

Irving Kershner's earlier films are quite dissimilar from *Star Wars*, with the possible exception of *The Flim Flam Man*, which has George C. Scott and Michael Sarrazin involved in an exhuberant chase through towns and cornfields with Harry Morgan in hilarious hot pursuit.

I have always had a soft spot for Kershner's 1966 film, *A Fine Madness*, with Sean Connery and Joanne Woodward. About five years back the CBS affiliate station in New York ran *A Fine Madness* as one of its late Saturday night movies. They received an irate call from one of their viewers at some time around one a.m. who was up

"...Perhaps CBS would like us to be a herd of walking zombies..."

in arms and ready to fight because he/she was sure that they had heard the word "shit" used during the telecast. The next day CBS had some of its employees run through the film to see if they had somehow missed the offensive word. They did not find it. However, they did issue what CBS calls a Feature Film Advisory Report, wherein they capsulized the film and detailed MANDITORY (their emphasis) cuts in the film. It has never been shown anywhere near its entirety since.

Let me quote from their directive in detailing plot and making critical judgements: "Somehow Miss Woodward gets Connery to visit a famous psychiatrist (Patrick O'Neal). Later, Connery ends up seducing a lady psychiatrist (Colleen Dewhurst) on the staff of the sanitarium and, also, the doctor's wife (Jean Seberg)."

Now, catch this: "even after a lobotomy, Connery is as violent as ever. The ending doesn't seem to offer much hope; only more trouble to come"

The lobotomy they are referring to is one that the doctor okays when he discovers that Connery has seduced his wife. The effect will be to nullify any emotional impulses and his creative drive (Connery plays a poet in the film). The violence that they comment upon is

CBS TELEVISION STATIONS 2 FINE MADNESS, A - 1966

Editing: Reel One (continued)
Langdon screaming and then have Connery rushing out amid crowd. A jump cut is unavoidable.
B) Perhaps it would be better to end scene with Miss Langdon just telling Connery her name and then cut entire scene with soap bubbles, etc. Pick-up with next sequence.

MANDATORY: Literary luncheon. Line cut.
Connery: "Let some metaphor creep above your knees."
Women are being lectured to on the subject of "love."

Editing: Reel Two
Note: Dr. West: "What the hell are you doing?"
Miss Woodward: "Who the hell....?"
"Who the hell....?"
"How the hell....?"
"And it hurt like hell."

MANDATORY: Just establish that Miss Seberg is in the whirlpool bath with Connery. Cut all the continuing footage of them splashing about. Incident must remain because Dr. West agreed then to let them perform a lobotomy on Connery.

Note: Doctor: "The hell with his poetry."
"His poetry is a substitute for sex."

Editing: Reel Three
MANDATORY: Cut the vicious kicking of Connery by cop after they catch Connery coming off bridge. Continue action.

Note: Miss Woodward: "I don't give a damn...."

MANDATORY: Dr. Freddie attempts to seduce Miss Seberg. Cut as much of it as possible. Incident does explain why she runs to save Connery from lobotomy operation. It's pretty graphic and Miss Seberg is in underclothing.

Note: Connery: "....damn poetry."

Reviewed: 4/25/72
J.S.

really his artistic rage against the hypocrisy and despair he views around him. The line: "The hell with his poetry. His poetry is a substitute for sex." is cut from the film by order of this directive, which seems to find it disconcerting that the lobotomy doesn't turn Connery into a walking zombie. The version of the film that remains has been effectively lobotomized.

Perhaps CBS would like us to be a herd of walking zombies. It would be easier to convince us that "We're looking good!" when the CBS eye looks up at us out of the toilet bowl.

Kershner was not treated kindly by CBS, but of course he is not the only director to suffer the butcher's scissors that lie on the censor's desks at all the networks. You can be sure if they ever get their hands on *The Empire Strikes Back*, though, that there is little for them to consider offensive and thus render the film nearly incomprehensible as they have done with *A Fine Madness*.

It's too bad. It was a nice, little film.

The Empire Strikes Back has three set pieces. The earlier mentioned ice-world of Hoth where freedom fighting rebels led by Princess Leia are hiding from the forces of the Empire. Darth Vader is closing in on their icy hide-out.

Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) gives the troops their final commands when it looks as if Vader and his lieutenants have discovered them, and in between she acts as an icy tease to make Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) swoon and to make Han Solo (Harrison Ford) jealous.

It did not occur to me until later, when a friend was saying that the inclusion of the black rogue, Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams) only pointed up the fact that there were no minorities in the legions of background workers/warriors/technicians/whoever in the *Star Wars* films that I realized there were a lot of other people missing as well.

Princes Leia, in all her frigid virginity, is the ONLY WOMAN in the *Star Wars* galaxy!

No offense to Carrie Fisher, but this could be scary, for her as well as all those male workers/warriors/technicians/whoever. I kept wondering what all those ice-world soldiers were doing to keep warm on those long, cold, lonely nights. The Princess teases Luke and Han with a few kisses and patronizing pats. It seems Luke and Han are the only ones with any libido.

Also, why is the only woman in this film so totally humorless?

I am not nitpicking here. My hope is that the third *Star Wars* entry will correct some of these oversights, and that we will learn that many races survived into its time period. We should also see a variety of women, of many types and moods, in the background and foreground. And God, please let some of them have a sense of laughter and light, a trace of poetry in their eyes, a warmth or compassion that, so far, has been reserved for the robots.

In the comics field, many editors are skeptical about the usage of minority characters. Books featuring ethnic heroes are not assured best-sellers. The majority of the people creating the books seldom venture past 90th Street in Manhattan. Most are not quite at ease with these other cultures in their midst. It can be as alien for them as a Storm Trooper from *Star Wars*. One hears hints of the Boogeyman in some hallowed halls.

Back in 1975, when I had created the character Wind Eagle for the *Panther Vs. The Klan* series, one editor called me into his private office and closed the door behind me. He wasn't keen on the idea that Wind Eagle was Puerto Rican. And no one, for a variety of reasons, was keen on the idea that the real-life Klan was being used in the book rather than the all-powerful, super-fanatic, serpent-robed Sons of the Serpent.

In the case of Wind Eagle, the editor was somber in that sixth floor office overlooking 56th Street. He spoke as if he were a mid-twenty year old version of Andy Hardy's father talking to a wayward son who was in his thirties.

"You should only use minorities for a reason."

"...A reason," he said. I still remember that, the way he said it, with quiet purpose, as if we were not discussing human beings. The implication was that if a minority character were used he/she should not display any overt ethnic flavor or background. I guess they should be as bland in personality as their stalwart white counterparts.

Sometimes I grin wryly at the memory, with just a trace of bemused pain.

Wind Eagle's family history, his strict Catholic upbringing, his alienation as he grew into adulthood, never had the chance to see publication. Rich Buckler had drawn five pages of the sixth chapter of the *Panther Vs. The Klan*, "Dragon Soldiers Marching As To War," before the office door closed for the last time.

Wind Eagle never got to light his communion candles.

Everyone knows, I assume, that the *Star Wars* films have a tremendous merchandising value. This is not an uncommon factor with big budget films or with the comic industry. The Work For Hire Contracts appeared only months before Cadence Industries took out weekly full

page ads in Variety promoting the characters their writers had signed away their rights to.

There is a new slant to the *Star Wars* films that hasn't any predecessor, as far as I can determine.

In *The Empire Strikes Back* there are a plethora of creatures, robots and war machines that fill the screen with noise and fury. Many are never identified, yet the rabid *Star Wars* devourer knows their names and origins like Bible passages they have learned to recite by rote.

The only way to learn this information is by reading the promotional magazines that are tied-in with the movie, and the novelizations of same and the comic book adaptations.

For example, one sequence in the second half of the film has Darth Vader employing a group of bounty hunters to track down Han Solo's hyperdrive customized ship, The Millennium Falcon. With one exception, the others are never named, although they are given names in the promotional book, including one ugly critter known as Zuckass.

CBS might have something to say about that, I suppose.

Luke helps the troops fend off some fantastic walking armored vehicles that look like gigantic metallic tortoises. Darth Vader's Admirals call them *A*ll *T*errain *A*rmored *T*ransport (AT-AT), and the effects people have devised them brilliantly. The snowspeeders zooming in and counterattacking has excitement and daring, and brings comic book battle royals to life, especially when Luke flies circles about one of the creature's legs, binding them until the machine stumbles and crashes into the snowy battlefield!

After the rebels, and in particular the Millenium Falcon have escaped with Han, Chewbacca, Princess Leia and C3PO, Luke takes off in his own rocket with R2D2. He is not headed toward the rendezvous with the rebel transport ships. Obi-Wan Kenobi has come to Luke in a vision on the ice world, telling him in somber, funeral tones to visit the planet Dogobah.

Dogobah is the second set piece in *The Empire Strikes Back*. It is an elaborately designed swamp world, with mist rising off the fetid water and shrouding gnarled tree trunks. Snakes twine sinuous along the boughs. It seems like a place as friendly as France is to American tourists.

Luke crash lands into the swamp, and when he extricates himself from the wreckage he meets Yoda, the Jedi Knight that is to teach him the ways of the Force. Yoda is a marvelous creation in visual terms. It is operated by Frank Oz, who has worked on many of the Muppets with Jim Henson.

Yoda makes alien form lifelike, in a manner that has seldom been achieved on film. The dwarfish size, the outlandish ears, but especially the huge, vulnerable expressive eyes set it apart from most other cinematic aliens. With his green hide and taloned hands holding a walking stick, he is a visual treat. When Yoda first begins to speak, however, he sounds too much like a defrocked muppet who has lost his way in some quasi-religious mumble-jumbo.

The Force is an element I can take or leave. Remembering the accomplishments of those stuntmen in the old serials, attaining what seemed impossible without the interjection of a mystical boost, I am left with the impression that the Force is an artificial ingredient. That's not entirely true, I guess, since Billy Batson always had to say "SHAZAM!" before he could become Captain Marvel, in both the serial and the comic.

I like some of the by-play between Luke and Yoda, and the Confucious one-liners are at times diverting, but the Force is too vaguely defined. It seems to be an ability only the select can attain. Luke Skywalker, Obi-Wan, Yoda,

Darth Vader and a few others are part of an aristocracy that are mysteriously tuned into the limitless potential of the Force. As well, I find it humorous that a slash from a laser sword somehow turned Obi-Wan into a transparent voyeur, who floats etherally over the sight of Luke's training ground as a Jedi-warrior.

Eventually Luke taps the Force enough to become clairvoyant. When he foresees Princess Leia and Han in trouble on the cloud world of Bespin, Luke ignores Yoda and Obi-Wan's dire predictions that he will be used by the Empire, or that he might succumb to the dark side of the Force. Luke rushes to the rescue and his final confrontation with Darth Vader.

"They must have been nuts! They were also great!" Dave Sharpe, doubling for Kane Richmond, ignores life, limb and the motor boat's blades from *Spy Smasher*."

The Empire Strikes Back is a strange serial, since the next chapter cannot be viewed for two or three years. The audience will surely wait for the third installment, although it will be called Chapter Six. According to Lucas there are three prior chapters that delineate the origins of the Empire, Darth Vader, and the rebel forces. Only R2D2 and C3P0 will appear in all episodes, which are planned for nine films before the serial epic is completed.

In *Time* magazine, Lucas is quoted as saying, "When I was in film school I went back and saw how awful some of those serials were. I began to analyze what in them could have excited me so much as a child, and I realized that they were a form of fantasy much more akin to mythology and fairy tales than anything else. I started getting involved with such stories and wondered what their purpose was in society."

I think he missed one type of magic, one which I hinted at earlier.

It is human magic as opposed to mechanical magic devised by humans.

One is not necessarily better than the other, and both display wondrous moments of cinema.

When an old serial worked—and admittedly many of them were terrible in script, acting, direction—but when they *did* work!—when William Lava's music would rush along the pell-mell action in *Daredevils of the Red Circle*—it thrilled me in a special way. Like Lucas, I've wondered why.

When I began *Panther's Rage* in 1973, my first impulse was to handle it as a contemporary serial, complete with cliff-hangers each issue. The first story reflects that attitude, although later an editorial edict decided that, since the book was bi-monthly, the stories must be self contained. It was a decision that I think strengthened the series, in that it made me concentrate on making each individual chapter work as a single unit, with its own structure and theme, while it also complemented, hopefully, the series as a whole.

> "...the magic was imbued in the energy and creativity, not to mention insanity, of the stuntmen..."

No one ever suspected the serial would run two years. I kept mum. Loose lips sink ships, remember.

What I hoped to achieve, within the format of a serial (where all the events are interconnected), was a tapestry of human events in the midst of revolution, how it changed and shaped or altered their lives. I wanted to add a human dimension that the serials had ignored.

After each week's death trap, the heroes would ingeniously escape, pick themselves up, brush themselves off and walk away. They never gave the torture or immediate threat of death a second thought. But, I wondered, in real life, if a person actually underwent such brutality, how would he/she live with the memories of such violence?

In the serials, by the way, I do not believe there was violence. There was action, and there is a difference between the two terms.

In a serial, the hero never suffered broken bones even though an entire brick wall was dropped upon him!

Blood was never spilled.

A hero might be sapped over the head, punched twenty or thirty times, stomped on, clobbered, but he never complained, not even of an Excedrin headache.

So, on one level, I decided to approach the Panther from that direction. I felt that the contrivance of introducing completely different, unrelated, superheroic threats, month after month, in a mysterious, hidden land, would defy any credibility. How did everyone find this supposedly secret domain?

In my mind's eye I always saw the Panther moving with grace and supple form. I wanted the art and the writing to capture that essence.

David Sharpe does not like to do anything the way normal human beings do. He doesn't walk, he bounds. He doesn't jump, he leaps. From *Dick Tracy vs. Crime Inc.*

When the Olympic gymnasts work out on the bars and mats, twirling, swirling, spinning, somersaulting, vaulting, straining for a perfection of movement, of timing, I feel an excitement akin to the one I experienced when I first saw Davey Sharpe, the stuntman, perform his acrobatic skills in that 1939 serial, *Daredevils of the Red Circle*. Of course I saw it on Saturday morning television in the 1950's, not when it was originally released to movie theaters.

I wanted to recreate that excitement for the readers who watched T'Challa strive and triumph. I may not have always succeded, but that is what I hoped to accomplish. Well, that movement in those gymnastics or in a beautifully realized ballet performance, reminds me of the cheers that came to my lips when Davey Sharpe confronted one of the many armed bad guy underlings in *Daredevils*.

"...It was like an old speak-easy club...but inside, ...**The Daredevils of the Red Circle** still work their magic..."

In one confrontation, Sharpe stood before a villain pointing a gun at him. Before the audience could blink or the trigger could be pulled, Sharpe moved almost too fast for the camera to record. He had gone into an instant handstand, and his legs had locked about the villain's throat. The momentum knocked the man off his feet, and there was Sharpe, sitting astride the body, throwing a quick right jab into his opponent's jaw! All in one smooth, flowing movement that takes perhaps seven seconds of film time. Your mind rejects what your eyes have just seen, and already you are beginning to doubt that it is possible for Sharpe to have moved so effortlessly and fluidly. Yet he did it time and again.

Now why should I get so excited when I watch these stuntmen caper about, taking impossible leaps onto moving cars, choreographing incredible fights moving at high velocity for five minutes (and in film-time that's a long time!).

In preparation for this article I borrowed the serial *Daredevils of the Red Circle* from a friend who, like George Lucas twenty years later, was captured and bewitched by the serials he had seen as a kid.

His name is Joe here in New York City, but he was known as Angelo, and later, José, when he was growing up, in the 1930's, in Puerto Rico. I want to give you some background on this special man because he was one of the first generation to take this form of story telling so much to heart, and have it influence his life. He never denied that love, even when it might be unfashionable.

His mother died when Joe was 23 days old. She was only 17 years old, herself. She had given birth and then had life taken away from her.

He grew up on a farm for the first eight years. The coffee plantations separated the miles between houses. When he was eight years old he moved to San Juan with his aunt, and that was the first time he entered a movie theater, and sat down in the quiet dark, waiting for the magical light to bring new, fantastic worlds into his eight year old life.

It cost five cents to get into the theater in 1934. Five cents could be a helluva lot of money. The depression had hit Puerto Rico as severely as it had hit New York City, or any other place in the States.

He's not sure which film he first saw in that darkened theater, the Eureka, in Puerto Tierra (Earth Door), but he recalls fondly, even today, Buster Crabbe as *Tarzan, The Fearless*; the racing car serial, *Burn 'Em Up Barnes*; and *The Vanishing Legion* with Harry Carey.

There were quite a few theaters a city boy could reach in those days, the Popular, Capitol, Fox, Paramount, but the kids who lived out in the dusty hills and coffee plantations and orange groves seldom got to visit them, unless their fathers had some type of transportation to drive them more than five miles on a Saturday. As Joe says, "It happened, maybe, once in a life time."

Joe was mesmerized by the serials. The films were in English, which he did not understand, but they had Spanish subtitles. He did understand the heroics. He and the other city kids played Tarzan and Buck Jones just the way they did in Oklahoma or Massachusetts.

When he was twelve years old he began to spend his summers with his Uncle, who was the second in command of the Police Department of Puerto Rico. This gave him a free pass to all the movies for two months out of the year and he would go from theater to theater, catching a matinee at one, waiting for the night showing at another. There weren't any continuous performances in those days. Sundays, after church, he would attend a matinal (morning showing), where a serial chapter and a B Western were played.

In 1944, he decided to come to New York to make his fortune. He wanted to marry a girl, and the rumor was that in the city of skycrapers, which he had seen only in movies, that there was a chance for fortune on its immaculate streets. Imagine! New York with a reputation for immaculate streets! Some things *do* change!

He left on an Army transport ship, the U.S. Grant. The Island of Puerto Rico (Rich Port) drifted by, 35 miles wide and 100 miles long. It was all the world he had known except for the movies.

"It sounds small," Joe says today, "but when you are there walking those miles around the hills and down the hills, it is tremendously big. I figure maybe the United States is bigger than this. Maybe ten times or twenty times. If I ask around I figure I'll find New York."

The Second World War was still underway, and the ship sailed in secrecy. It did not dock at New York. It docked in the Mississippi River at New Orleans. Where the hell were the skycrapers?

Joe knew only a few words in English, and he was not aware of the segregated atmosphere in the South. When he and some black friends entered a local restaurant, they could not understand why they were not served. Finally, upset, they left and went to a nearby bar, where the bartender said they could not drink their drinks inside, they'd have to sit out on the steps. When they took seats on a train bound for New York, the conductor told them they would have to leave the white folks car and sit in the smoking car. When they refused, the conductor had the entire car disengaged, had the train reconnected, and took off without them.

As Joe says these days, "Lucky we didn't get killed, because now that we are sitting there with blacks, we are not supposed to be there. But, at the time, I wasn't aware at all. You can discriminate against someone when you have money. If you got a lotta money, you can tell this guy to go to hell, because you don't need him. You don't like him because he's Japanese, or Black, or don't like him because he's Indian, or something, but you got to have money to afford that. When you are poor you can't afford to say, 'I don't like you,' because of this or that."

In New York, it was less than immaculate, and for a long while he worked as a busboy for one of the hotels. Slowly he started his electrical business, and he rented himself a small place in the wilds of Manhattan.

In the 1950's, when the serials had returned with a vengeance on the television screens infiltrating more and more households, Joe found out he could buy the B Westerns and serials he had loved as a kid in the '30s. Until 1960 you could buy one of the films, a 16mm print, for $12.00. A friend advised Joe

Davey Sharpe in an incredible stunt that tells audiences that—yes!—Captain Marvel can really fly.

In selecting these photos, I learned that Davey Sharpe died just recently. I remember him mostly as a seven year old boy whom he taught that anything is possible in life!

For Davey Sharpe, who wondered what all the furor was about when the stuntman's contribution to film was finally recognized.

For him, creating magic was just second nature!

that it was too high a price to pay. These days one of those films, in good condition, will cost you over a hundred bucks, sometimes way over a hundred bucks.

His enthusiasm for the serials had not diminished. When Warren Publications presented *Screen Thrills Illustrated* for a short run in the early '60s, he read an article that told about secret movie showings of old serials out in Queens. Joe's business was in a hole in the wall in Manhattan, but his home was in the Bronx. Nevertheless, he spent weekends traveling out to different points in Queens, just in hopes that he would pass by a house and hear the sound of a projector! Although he was shy, if his luck panned out, he planned to knock on the door and try to wrangle an invitation from the secret society. He never found them that way.

However, years later, through some book dealers and another film collector he did locate the source. All the blocks he walked years earlier had been nowhere close to where the magic films were being played.

When the original group closed down, his love for those films stayed with him. He began his own film society in that hole in the wall. He cleared out the electrical supplies and put in a movie screen. He built a projectors booth and installed two projectors. He wired together a sound system. And he formed Joe's place, replete with old movie house chairs, with declining steps so that you can easily see over the head of the person in front of you. It was like an old speak-easy club. You don't know it's there unless you're invited by someone who does know. The smoke and fumes of Manhattan drift by along with the derelicts with swollen flesh, wearing newspaper shoes and gutter-stained clothing; but inside, the serials and the B Westerns and the Busby Berkeley musicals and Dick Tracy and *The Daredevils of the Red Circle* still work their magic.

It was at Joe's Place that I had a chance to reexperience William Boyd as Hopalong Cassidy, and to see Dave Sharpe make believe that human beings could defy the heavens and gravity in Captain Marvel.

Joe kept the dream alive for all of us, in the way that Lucas has made new dreams for succeeding generations.

It will be interesting to see how the *Star Wars* canon affects the kids growing up with it today. Will it affect them with the same passion as it did George Lucas, or Joe, or people not only in the States, but in other countries, as well? Can these film chapters with a three year schism between each segment have the same effect as shows that swept you along week after week?

I think they will.

And I'll be interested to see what works rise out of that love and desire.

I'll want to see what new daredevils enter new wicked empires, and I hope I never lose the ability to cheer and applaud.

And I hope you don't lose it, either.

People needed it back then; they need it now; they'll need it in the future.

With a force . . .or without it. ■

If you want to sell comic books, any editor worth his india ink will tell you to put gorillas on the cover. They don't know why it works, not exactly anyway, but every time a simian is featured doing some deed normally relegated to Homo Sapien endeavor, the book sells like gangbusters. It's one of those unknown secrets of the trade, passed on from generation to generation until the why becomes obscured by the simple fact that it works.

There's a sure-fire sell formula for movies also, and no, it's got nothing to do with either T's or A's. Sorry friends, the erotic sales point is now Hollywood box office history. A trip down 42nd Street (where the pulse of humanity beats 24 hours a day) will prove that Kung-Fu has finally managed to outdistance porno as *the* place for kicks.

The fact is that *violence* is the "in" cinematic sell these days, but it's not the horrifyingly hard-bitten realism of films like *Apocalypse Now* that's raking in the bucks. No, this year's thrills come from the classic techniques employed from the very beginnings of American cinema. I speak of Slapstick, of *comic* violence, inconsequential and vicarious in its roots and ramifications.

Physical pain (and death, for that matter) has always been a topic the American public would rather laugh at than consider with clinical exactitude.

From the days of Chaplin, comedy films have fed the flames of America's yearning for harmless tragedy. Piano's fell on heads, people fell off office buildings, trains collided—all without consequence or repurcussions to the individuals involved. The piano smashes onto the Tramp's head, and moments later Chaplin can be seen dusting himself off and bouncing off into the sunset. The head-on 50 mph train crash leaves its occupants dazed, but no worse for wear. The hammer plunges into the cranium, confusing, but never killing, the object of it's affections.

Comic physical violence reached its cinematic apex with the Three Stooges, a comedy trio whose entire act was hinged on the degree and extent of bodily abuse each of the three could inflict on the others. The appeal lay in each two-reelers' ability to convey a non-stop violent continuity, so that viewers could enjoy both the heightening of the non-narrative abuse the Stooges were inflicting on each other, while casually absorbing the actual plot of each film. The Three Stooges constantly beat each others brains in, and stopped only occasionally to deal with the danger of outside violence, which, in retrospect, seemed to be the usual excuse for a plot.

The sole comic point of any Three Stooges film lay in the content and quality of its violent asides. A nose tweak was poor compensation for a kick to the stomach, but metal pincers wrapped around the head were a real scream. The comic quality of each gag was directly proportional to the degree of violence obtained.

But on a deeper level, as the gags became more and more violent, they stretched further and further away from reality. A punch in the nose was something each viewer could understand, so

Clockwise from above: Dan Aykroyd as Elwood Blues dances up a storm; John Candy in an unusual role for him as Jake's parole officer; A revitalized Cab Calloway (Curtis) belts out "Minnie the Moocher"; backed by The Blues Brothers Band. Sister Mary Stigmata (Kathleen Freeman) exorcises the brothers from her office

it was only mildly humorous. But a head making a 360° turn was pure fantasy, hence twice as funny. As the "real" reference point for each gag became farther removed, nervous laughter gave vent to unrestrained guffaws.

At times, Laurel and Hardy also resorted to this rather extremist humor technique, which is an easy way of bringing us to that comic team's modern day counterpart, John Belushi and Dan Ackroyd. In their latest film, ***The Blues Brothers***, the two recapture slapstick violence in its heyday, as well as bringing recent comic innovations to light.

Produced for a meager 30 million dollars, ***The Blues Brothers***, must be the most expensive vehicle film ever made. Basically, the film concerns the adventures of Jake and Elwood, two brothers who bear absolutely no resemblence to one another, and their attempt to put on a benefit Blues concert to raise money for the orphange they were raised in. With this admittedly scanty premise, director John Landis (of *Animal House* fame), manages to construct a visually captivating epic of comic violence.

The film's premise is an old one, used since time immemorial as a way of getting two studio stars onto the silver screen with as few distractions as possible. Ever since Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland decided to put on a school play, Hollywood has pursued what I call the "Musical Objective" film..one which takes two people with an idea for a show or concert, and follows them as they try to obtain their objective. The last ten minutes of the film, needless to say, present the fruits of their labors. These films were especially popular in the fifties, during rock n roll's first cinematic exploration. When producers discovered that the rock musician who could also act was a rare commodity, real actors were needed to keep audiences occupied when Bill Haley, or Danny and the Juniors, weren't singing.

The Blues Brothers follows the formula to a T. After Jake (Belushi) is released from prison, he and brother Elwood 'get religion' at a Baptist church meeting conducted by the reverend James Brown. With the Blues in their hearts, the two attempt to reorganize their old band, and at the same time try to avoid the grasp of no less than: The Illinois State Police, a redneck country and western musical band, and the Skokie chapter of the American Nazi party.

Yet, even here, production values don't really surface until the end of the film. Despite a maddened three-car chase scene through an indoor shopping mall (which effectively destroys the entire place), viewers get little inkling of what's to come. The conclusion of the film, viewers suppose, must be the actual concert performance, and when this occurs, viewers might be tempted to leave unsatisfied.

But the concert is only the beginning, and in retrospect it seems that the first hour and half of the movie is spent setting up the final chase scene.

It begins inauspiciously enough. Jake and Elwood have managed to get the five thousand dollars necessary to pay the orphanage's taxes. But to pay the tab the two must get to downtown Chicago without reciprocation by the three groups that are out for their blood. The chase sequence seems to span a fifty mile area, from the country side to the heart of Chicago. Along the way, no less than fifty police cars are mangled, mutilated, and mauled as they fly over cliffs, smash through embankments, pile up at intersections, and crash into (and through) tractor trailers.

It's relatively easy to film a chase scene in the countryside. But the closer you get to an urban environment, the harder it is to film your movie. Unlike a studio, urban areas seldom allow for incident-free shooting. Location shooting in large cities is always difficult and, more importantly, costly. So when viewers see fifty police cars, a handful of firetrucks, and a healthy chunk of the

Clockwise from below. You are what you drive and the Blues Brothers drive the Bluesmobile. Slick booking agent (Steve Lawrence) meets with The Blues Brothers. On a mission from God. Jake and Elwood Blues preach their gospel; The man behind the voice. Frank Oz (Yoda) as a Joliet Prison corrections officer

all photos © 1980 Universal City Studios, Inc

National Guard, complete with tanks and heavy artillery, storm Dealy Plaza in downtown Chicago, they should be able to figure out where a good percentage of John Landis' budget went. Although *The Blues Brothers* is hardly a 'special effects' movie, it proves that you can spend your money in ways other than exploding Death Stars and ominous looking aliens.

Comic violence abounds. The Dealy Plaza sequence includes a vignette where a car occupied by Klan leader Henry Gibson is dropped from a helicopter into the heart of the city. A mystery woman in a sportscar (played with overstated menace by Carrie Fisher) regularly firebombs, bazookas, and dynamites the Brothers, managing to destroy everything *but* her intended victims. Here, as at other points in the film, the violence is overstated, and the more ridiculous it seems to be, the funnier it is. At one point, Belushi and Ackroyd are actually skyrocketed into the air while making a telephone call, and at another, are occupying a building when it is levelled to the ground. In true slapstick form, the Brothers simply get up, brush themselves off, and continue on their "mission from God."

Aside from the Carrie Fisher mystery woman villain, writers Ackroyd and Landis have dreamed up a number of antagonistic groups that seem to spring out of the pet peeves of the early National Lampoon staff. A batch of incredibly stupid State Troopers (led by John Candy of *Second City* T.V. fame) make for most of the visual comedy, but sight gags are also provided by the members of the Good Old Boys, a rednecked country band that travels around in an ill-fated Winnebago. At the top of the Ackroyd/Landis hate list, however, are the American Nazi group, who suffer the most outlandish fate of all.

Yet, for all its satiric glimpses at what its creators believe to be the least desireable elements of American society, and despite the pretense of appreciation for american blues music, in the final analysis *The Blues Brothers* is a car movie. Like the sure-fire comic book sell, car chases are something everybody loves. Remember the Keystone Kops? Well, we haven't really come that far since then. But like the rule of comic violence, the element that separates a "serious" chase from a comic chase is the quantity of elements involved. One car chasing another is seldom funny (unless, say, the chasee is drunk, or the chaser is blind) but mass car chases are always funny—regardless of whether or not they want to be considered that way.

In *The Blues Brothers*, you are what you drive. Automobiles are in the American blood, and in this movie you can tell more about each character from the car he or she drives than from any dialogue they might mouth. The Nazis drive a blood red compact. The rednecks drive a Winnebago. And the Brothers themselves ride the Bluesmobile, a revved up, stripped down Plymouth that was once the pride of some small town police force.

More than anything else, however, the *Blues Brothers* seems to be an appreciation of early comedy. By updating a series of old, but nevertheless effective comic situations, director Landis gives them new meaning, and never mind if they're cliche in retrospect. But the situations that seem so believable in old Buster Keaton and Harry Langdon 20's shorts seem rather surreal today. It's no less funny, mind you, but without the innocent edge so prevalent in silent comedy, many scenes have an absurdist feel to them. Perhaps something of this sort, a comedy that stretches well beyond the limits of realism, is what America is looking for. Personally, its all those images of carnage without consequences that made *The Blues Brothers* a hit for me. ■

Skyships and Earth Nymphs

The art and world of Rick Bryant.

As the above title indicates, we all feel more comfortable if we can slot things. It's unnerving to have to constantly revise your universe because someone or something won't keep within a finite set of rules. I could just let you keep gazing at the cover of this magazine and convince you that starships and women were the whole of Rick Bryant's world and art. It would be a great injustice to do so. To Rick. And to you.

I've known Rick for close to fifteen years now. He is still, quite often, an enigma to me.

In deference to this fact, this short article will not be typical, either as biographical sketch or as critique. I am less concerned with external events than with my own personal experience with Rick and his artwork.

However, for the linearists:

Rick Bryant was born July 4th, 1952 in Clintwood, Virginia. His family, however, did a lot of traveling around the country. Eventually, during the sixties, they more or less settled into Santa Cruz, California.

At some point in his dim and ancient childhood, Rick simply began to draw. The actual stimuli that catalyzed this are lost to hazy memory (his, not mine). And what he drew mostly were spaceships. From the early examples I've had the opportunity to see, he utilized an instinctual drafting style with precisely ruled lines, as if he were designing a totally functional reality rather than escaping into worlds of fantasy. During those early formative years; Rick discovered comic books. These intrigued and stimulated him and he soon began to try to copy the pictures freehand. He wanted to trace them (a method many an artist starts out with), but in all his travels no one had bothered to introduce him to tracing paper.

From there, the predictable Wertham pattern of escalating addiction pretty much happened on cue—television, science fiction and fantasy, film and rock. And, oh yes, women!

Rick's early training in art dosen't amount to much statisticly—some high school art classes, including drafting, and a few life drawing classes at the local college. His real training has been, as with many artists, endless hours of drawing, drawing and more drawing. Unlike some artists, he isn't happy with that fact. He still feels there is nothing more valuable to an artist than a classical art education as a foundation, with thorough grounding in anatomy, design and theory.

If you must know, like most creative people who aren't born independently wealthy, Rick worked at an endless variety of jobs before coming to New york. They are memories best left on their dusty shelves as you'll find no great key to Rick Bryant there, except to know a little of what drives Rick to being, first and always, a full-time artist, even in the lean times.

Rick and I came to New York City in the early seventies. He spent six years in and around the comics industry, but in the course of that time found his true creative expression was illustration, not storytelling, and now works very much in that framework.

More slots. And, if you ever get the opportunity to browse through Rick's portfolio and private sketchbooks, you'll find none of them hold up.

Rick is a driven artist, but he is by no means monastic. If he confined himself to his studio twenty-four hours a day, I suspect he would simply dry up. The world, all worlds, are important to Rick, and everything that he comes in contact with becomes a part of his vision. A book, a film, even a candlelit dinner for that matter, changes some certain perception in some way. His artistic statement is liquid and

changes with every shift in landscape around him.

This is nothing new. It was certainly true when I first got to know Rick in high school. Not only did new artwork give him inspiration (he always had an uncanny intuition for looking at printed art and figuring out the technology needed to reproduce the effect himself, something like the musician's playing by ear). A rapid reader, Rick consumed countless SF novels, tossing out the non-essentials and assimilating concepts, characters and potential visuals. At the same time, he stumbled on the turn of the century, a period Rick still regards as one of the last great artistic eras. He studied

most of the artists of the Art Nouveau movement (especailly Klimt and Mucha), and even read literature and poetry of the period.

Rick takes in all these materials and stores them in some way, letting them come back out at any time and in whatever form they will. He points out that he is not an artist who sits down at the drawing board with a precise image of what he will be drawing (which is principly why he doesn't feel comfortable as a storyteller). The drawing or painting just, somehow, begins to take shape. Rick finds himself as much the spectator as the artist. In this way, Rick is never stopped by "I can't do **that**!" He will take on anything that interests him and find some method to do it. Most often, he succeeds! The fact is, I theorize that Rick really can draw anything. He chooses, most times, to draw starships and women.

Why starships and women? Starships because they represent flights of fantasy carrying one away from the world? Women because they represent flights of fantasy carrying one back to the world? We can speculate. Rick only smiles and shakes his head

Rick does not analyze his work and, though you may gain his curiosity for a moment or two, he doesn't care much about "interpretations" of his art. He is no symbolist and has no patience with artwork that "requires" an explanation (especially if the artist demands that the audience reach the same interpretation that he invested into it!). Rick's artscapes are impressions, a single still moment in time and space captured with all its enigmas, all its incongruities. And no explanations. The risks are greater that way—you either like the piece or you don't. There are no qualifiers or apologies.

Rick is himself much the same way. He is direct, bold, proud, fierce in who he likes and dislikes, and very outspoken. He says what he feels at any given time, without compromise, and demands that the world accept it on that level because that is Rick Bryant.

Rick is not the sort of artist that editors and art directors feel most comfortable with. He is unpredictable and uncompromising. Never mind that the final product might be excellent, it won't necessarily conform to the editor/art director's preconception of what it would look like. Rick isn't an artist who draws like so-and-so who is popular right now. Rick doesn't cash in. The world already has so-and-so—he wants to give the world Rick Bryant. Whoever he is.

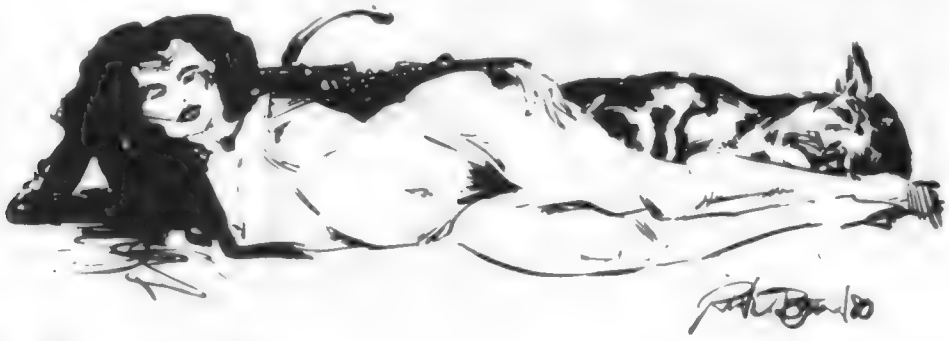
I recall a time when I was an editor for Marvel Comics, putting together an all-articles magazine dealing with the martial arts. I knew Rick was very much "into" the martial arts and I needed some spot illustrations. Yet, I hesitated. Even knowing Rick as I had, I bought the "space-stuff" stereotype because Rick had been concentrating on that in his portfolio. Still, the magazine was a one-shot experiment, so I went ahead with the commission. What Rick delivered was an "uncharacteristicly" human piece which was not only untypical for him (read that: my conception of him), but untypical for martial arts illustration. No exaggerated pose or glorified violence, but a simple portrait shot, mostly face and hands (clutching a sword). He captured in that face and in those tightened knuckles more sensitivity, more feeling, more true spirit of the martial arts than I had seen in any handful of drawings.

Rick's art never sits still, his expression is liquid. And you're never sure what you'll get when he starts a new work—except that it will be a Rick Bryant.

In the past two years, I've seen Rick's art go through amazing transformations. It seemed to emerge during a period where he was really able to come to grips with the fact that he really didn't want to do comics, storytelling, but rather illustration (storyimaging?). A new awareness and sensitivity opened up in his linework, new worlds filled his sketchbooks, including a vast series of animal, bird and fish drawings. Out of these emerged a series of dolphin paintings that are breathtaking, both in their execution and in their depth of expression.

But the starships and women are still there, as you can see. Starships, women—and the entire universe between.

—John Warner



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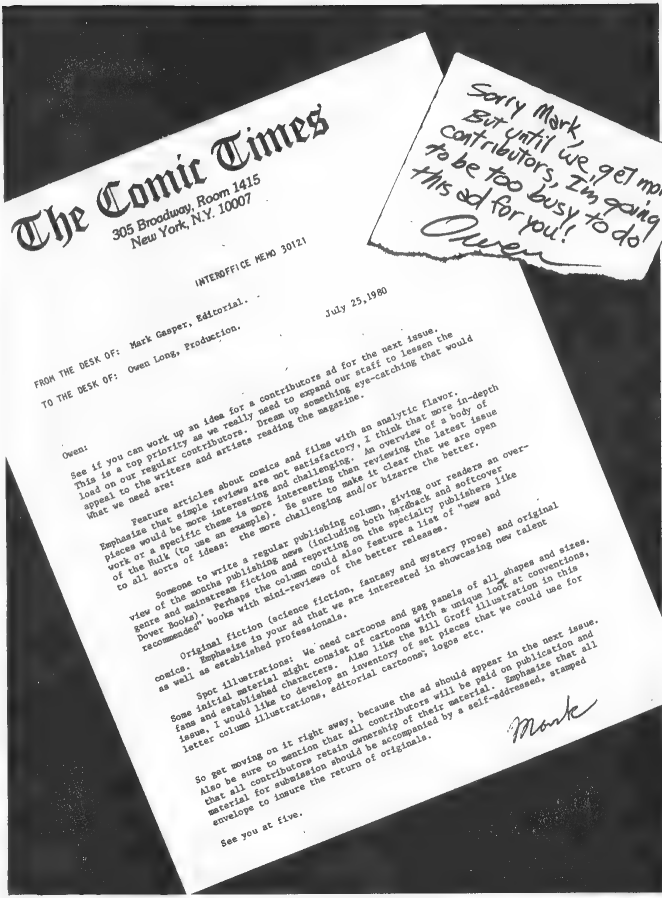

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Sorry Mark, But until we get more contributors, I'm going to be too busy to do this ad for you!
Owen

INTEROFFICE MEMO 30121

FROM THE DESK OF: Mark Gasper, Editorial.
TO THE DESK OF: Owen Long, Production.

July 25,1980

Owen:

See if you can work up an idea for a contributors ad for the next issue. This is a top priority as we really need to expand our staff to lessen the load on our regular contributors. Dream up something eye-catching that would appeal to the writers and artists reading the magazine.

Feature articles about comics and films with an analytic flavor. What we need are: Emphasize that simple reviews are not satisfactory. I think that more in-depth pieces would be more interesting and challenging. An overview of a body of work or a specific theme is more interesting than reviewing the latest issue of the Hulk (to use an example). Be sure to make it clear that we are open to all sorts of ideas; the more challenging and/or bizarre the better.

Someone to write a regular publishing column, giving our readers an overview of the mocha publishing news (including on both hardback and softcover genre and mainstream fiction and reporting. Perhaps the column could also feature a list of "New and Dower Books", "Perhaps the column could also feature a list of "new and recommended" books with mini-reviews of the better releases.

Original fiction (science fiction, fantasy and mystery prose) and original comics. Emphasize in your ad that we are interested in showcasing new talent as well as established professionals.

Spot illustrations: We need cartoons and gag panels of all shapes and sizes. Some initial material might consist of cartoons with a unique look at conventions, fans and established characters. Also like the Bill Groff illustration in this issue, I would like to develop an inventory of set pieces that we could use for letter column illustrations, editorial cartoons, logos etc.

So get moving on it right away, because the ad should appear in the next issue. Also be sure to mention that all contributors will be paid on publication and that all contributors retain ownership of their material. Emphasize that all material for submission should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope to insure the return of originals.

See you at five.

Mark

THE JAMES BURNS

The film industry and the world was shocked last July 24 when Peter Sellers died of a heart attack at the age of 54. Sellers had a history of heart trouble beginning with his first near-fatal cardiac arrest in 1964 which forced him to bow out of his first Hollywood production, **Kiss Me Stupid**. Peter's condition became somewhat stablized when he had a pacemaker installed in 1977 until he was hospitalized two months ago in a Dublin hospital.

Seller's career, including such films as **The Ladykillers**, **Lolita**, **The World of Henry Orient**, **The Party**, and **Murder by Death**, will be capped this month with the release of his final movie, **The Fiendish Plot of Fu Manchu**, a comedic adaptation of Sax Rohmer's novelized chronicles of the infamous villain. Sellers plays the title role in addition to five other parts, including Nayland Smith, Fu's arch foe. Portraying multiple roles is considered a Sellers trademark, having previously created more than one character in such films as **The Mouse That Roared**, **Dr. Strangelove**, and **The Prisoner of Zenda**.

"When I'm creating these actors," Sellers explained shortly before his death, "I'm the opposite of a method actor. I don't spend hours contemplating how someone like Fu Manchu would hold a cup, based on the trauma of having once seen his nanny in her muslin nightie. When I find a voice for a character, everything else falls into place. I know precisely how he should walk . . .react . . .or hold a cup."

For Fu Manchu, Sellers was determined not to resort to the "stilted stereotype" of swapping his "r's" for "l's."

"That's demeaning," Sellers remarked. "It's been done to death and it's not funny."

Peter decided that **his** Fu Manchu (who is 168 years old), was educated at Eton, the English prep school. His speech would reflect what Sellers labelled "Fu's extraordinary sex appeal. After all, if you've devoted 150 years to depravity, you're bound to get good at it."

After creating countless "voices" for films (Sellers once dubbed **17** different parts in **one** production), the actor loved to quip when asked by reporters what his **own** voice was, "I think it's the way I'm talking to you now, although I'm not quite sure. I've been doing this for so long, I've half forgotten. There used to be a me, but I had it surgically removed."

"As far as I can tell," he once continued more seriously, "I have no personality of my own whatsoever. That is, I have no personality to offer the public. I have nothing to project. If you met me away from a movie set, you would never guess what business I'm in."

The Fiendish Plot of Fu Manchu also stars Sid Ceasar, Simon Williams and David Tomlinson and was directed by Piers Haggard from a screenplay by Jim Moloney and Rudy Dochterman. Sellers was drawn to the Orion Pictures/Warner Brothers project as a change of pace from his last cinematic appearance as Chance the gardener (for which he received an Oscar nomination) in Hal Ashby's biting satire, **Being There**.

"The timing was right for me to do something outrageous again," Sellers said. "Besides, I like the character. I used to listen in terror to the old **Fu Manchu** radio series when I was growing up. The poor blighter is 168-years old. His henchmen have to plug him into a wall socket every morning to keep him ticking. The police of six continents are searching for him and he **still** hasn't conquered the civilized world, defiled its women or pillaged its cities. The man deserves **some** sympathy."

But as to whether or not the actor was content with his final screen performance, the answer is that he might not have been too concerned.

"My ambition in the cinema," Sellers explained, "ever since I read Jerry Kozinski's **Being There**, was to play that book's lead character. I wanted to play that role for six years, but it took that long for someone to have the guts—or the insight—to make the picture. I finally realized my ambition, and so now I have no more."

Unfortunately, now neither do we.

★ ☆ ★

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Clockwise from right, FBI Agent Joe Capone (Sid Caesar) tries to persuade Nayland Smith (played by Peter Sellers) out of retirement. Take a quick look at the old evil genius, Dr. Fu Manchu (also played by Peter Sellers) because he's about to drink his magic youth elixer and . . .; Presto! Good as new. Peter Sellers as the young Doctor; Young Peter Sellers, from *The Ladykillers*. Peter Sellers' most famous character, Inspector Clouseau. The role that Sellers wanted to play more than any other, Chance, the gardener from Jerzy Kosinski's *Being There*.

MEDIA REPORT

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With the press concentrating on the untimely death of Peter Sellers, the media has largely overlooked the passing of another film star, Don (Red) Barry, at the age of 69 on July 17. Once one of Hollywood's top ten money-making western stars, Barry was first noticed by cinema mavens when he played numerous heavies in Republic's western serials of the late 1930s and early '40s. Don's greatest success came when he thrilled audiences in the **Red Ryder** chapter-plays. Barry went on to appear in many films, including **The Woman I Love, Bandolero** and **The Shakiest Gun in the West** but more recently was only seen making infrequent appearances as a semi-regular character on **Police Woman** and in such movies as **Orca**.

The actor had reportedly been feeling depressed over his recent career (or lack thereof), when on the evening of the 17th (according to **Variety**), "police had been called to the Barry home in North Hollywood by his estranged wife Barbara," where they found that by then that Don and his ex-spouse had "seemingly ironed out what was termed a minor family dispute. As officers were returning to their car, Barry reportedly ran out of the house brandishing a .38 calibre revolver and shot himself in the head before police could stop him."

It would be naive to think that Hollywood should take better care of its aging stars as their careers decline, but perhaps it wouldn't be too much to wish that the entertainment community would help, at least, to cushion their fall.

★ ☆ ★

Paramount Pictures is prepping **Breaking Glass**, "the first punk rock musical," for release. The film concerns a young, English pseudo-New Wave rock group struggling for recognition in London and how Kate's (the band's lead singer), "talent and sanity is jeopardized by the mechanizations of the music business power structure." Produced by Davina Belling and Clive Parsons (**The Girl From Petrovka, Harry and Walter Go to New York**), **Breaking Glass** stars Phil Daniels (**Quadrophenia**), as a hustling young manager with "a heart of gold," Jon Finch as a cynical record producer, and newcomer Hazel O'Connor (a local London singing talent), as Kate.

In addition to making her screen debut in **Breaking Glass**, Hazel O'Connor also wrote the film's thirteen songs.

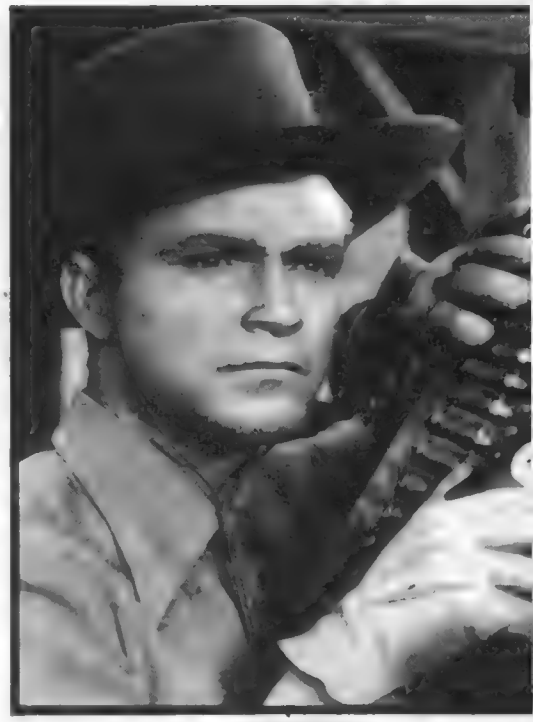
"Brian came to one of my band's gigs—then—well, I sort of started writing songs for the movie and telling them about punk because I knew quite a lot of punks from the early days . . . I was working really before I knew it. I wrote the songs, then we started filming. I never really thought about it, which was stupid because I didn't realize what hard work filming was. I was ill right from the start of the film. I kept getting colds and things which held them up. Next time, I'll be more organized . . ."

★ ☆ ★

Action-adventure television fans should be in clover this Fall when CBS–TV revives two old series for one-shot movie specials. Following up last year's encore telefeature, Robert Conrad and Ross Martin will team again for **More Wild, Wild West** including such guest stars as Dr. Joyce Brothers . . . . William Conrad will star in **The Return of Frank Cannon** and then portray another rotund detective, Rex Stout's classic mystery character, Nero Wolfe.

Twentieth Century Fox has edited a package of five movie specials from 1974's **Planet of the Apes** television program for syndication. The underrated continuation of the popular movie series starred Ron Harper and James Naughton as human astronauts Alan Virdon and Peter Burke and Roddy McDowall as the renegade chimpanzee, Galen, with Mark Lenard (**Star Trek**'s Romulan commander, Mr Spock's father and the **Trek** movie's Klingon leader) as the gorilla, General Urko, and Booth Colman as Dr. Zaius. Watch your local listings for when the **Apes** shows will be on in your area.

★ ☆ ★



Don (Red) Barry

Hazel O'Connor stars in *Breaking Glass*, a punk rock musical

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★ ☆ ★

"I don't enjoy directing at all, have no confidence whatsoever and know each picture is my last one," says Hollywood veteran Don Siegel (**Hell is For Heroes**, **Invasion of the Body Snatchers**, **The Killers**, **The Shootist**). While his last statement is certainly overly pessimistic, Siegel's self-doubts have been justified by the lackluster performance of his latest feature, **Rough Cut**, starring Burt Reynolds. The film's thematic hodgepodge, however, really isn't Siegel's fault, since reports indicate that producer David Merrick was constantly breathing down his neck. At one point, Siegel was even fired and Merrick brought in Peter Hunt (**On Her Majesty's Secret Service**) to finish shooting. But when Burt Reynolds refused to complete the movie without Don, Merrick had to hire the usually top-notch filmmaker back. **Rough Cut**'s screenplay also required incessant rewrites (the credited screenwriter, Francis Burns, is a nom de plume of **several** authors). Sneak preview audiences were **so** disappointed with the movie that **Rough Cut**'s ending had to be changed. The current climax wasn't shot until shortly before the film's release.

Despite all of these problems, Burt Reynolds still claims that making **Rough Cut** was a good experience.

"I've been wanting to work with Don Siegel for a long time," confides Reynolds, "but my best friend, Clint Eastwood, got in first and kept hiding him from me (Eastwood and Siegel teamed on **Coogan's Bluff**, **Dirty Harry**, **The Beguiled**, **Two Mules For Sister Sara**, and **Escape From Alcatraz**). I think I only got my chance with Siegel because Clint went off to do his own thing.

"Working with Don on **Rough Cut** was an education. It was better than spending time at the film department at UCLA. I've directed a couple of films and I remember when I set out to make the first picture that I asked some directors for advice. I wish I'd known Siegel then but, as I've said before, Clint was hiding him from me at the time."

Regardless of Eastwood's alledged "monopolizing" of Don Siegel, Reynolds would like to pool his talents with Clint's on celluloid.

"Clint and I have been looking for a suitable project for a long time. The problem is that we both want to be directors. We've been looking for another **Butch Cassidy** or **The Sting**, then I'll direct him and he'll direct me; seems like a reasonable compromise."

What does Don Siegel think of the idea?

"If I'm going to lose my two leading men at one throw, I can only say that they'd better find a role for me." ∎

Clockwise from below: Clint Eastwood in his most famous role, Harry Callahan from Don Siegel's *Dirty Harry*; Burt Reynolds tries his "Arab impression" in *Rough Cut*; A semi-retired David Niven makes his one screen appearance for 1980 as a Scotland Yard inspector from Don Siegel's *Rough Cut*; Lesley-Anne Down, a politician's daughter with a penchant for kidnomena tries to settle her differences with Burt Reynolds over a glass of champagne; A temporary truce established, the allies ponder their next moves.

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DAREDEVIL DRUG STORY SHELVED

The 2 part Daredevil story which was rejected by the Comics Code Authority last month has been shelved indefinitely. Marvel had originally planned to run the story without code approval in **Daredevil** (recently promoted to monthly status), but at the last moment Jim Galton, the President of Cadence, reversed his decision and pulled the story.

It was then proposed to use the story as the first in a new series of direct sales Marvel album books, but that idea was rejected. There is a chance that the story may appear in a non-code approved Marvel black and white book but no final decision has been reached.

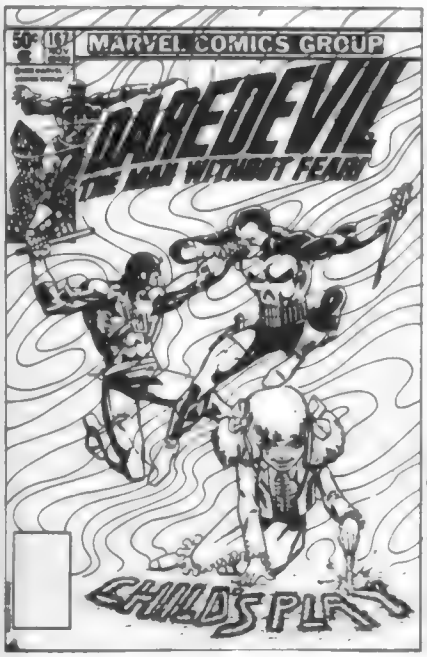
MARVEL ALBUM NOTES

Marvel Comics is preparing to enter the new direct sales market, attempting to capitalize on the market discovered by alternative publishers like WaRP Graphics, Eclipse Enterprises and the major underground publishers. Planned are a series of one-shot books in full-processed color by the most popular writers and artists in the field. Among the books already scheduled for production is **X-Men 1** by Chris Claremont, John Byrne and Terry Austin (for which a plot has been completed), **Elric 1** by Roy Thomas and Craig Russell, the second installment of **Metamorphosis Odyssey** by Jim Starlin and an untitled book by Walt Simonson.

Marvel is planning a whole line of album projects and many projects are being discussed. One possibility under consideration is to combine two issues of the Steve Englehart, Gil Kane **Prisoner** book, completed in 1976, but never published.

STARLIN TO KILL CAPTAIN MARVEL

Jim Starlin has been awarded the contract to kill Captain Marvel in a Marvel album book. Mr Starlin, who was previously responsible for the death of the main character of his other Marvel series, Adam Warlock, in **Avengers Annual** 7 and **Marvel Two In One Annual** 2, has developed into "outside muscle" employed only in special circumstances." No date for the "hit" has been decided, although it is reported that Mr. Starlin will remain true to his modus operendi and give the death of the ex-Kree lieutenant an epic scope.



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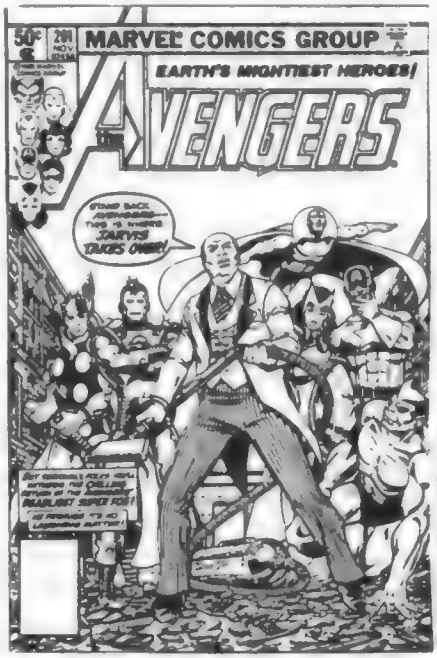

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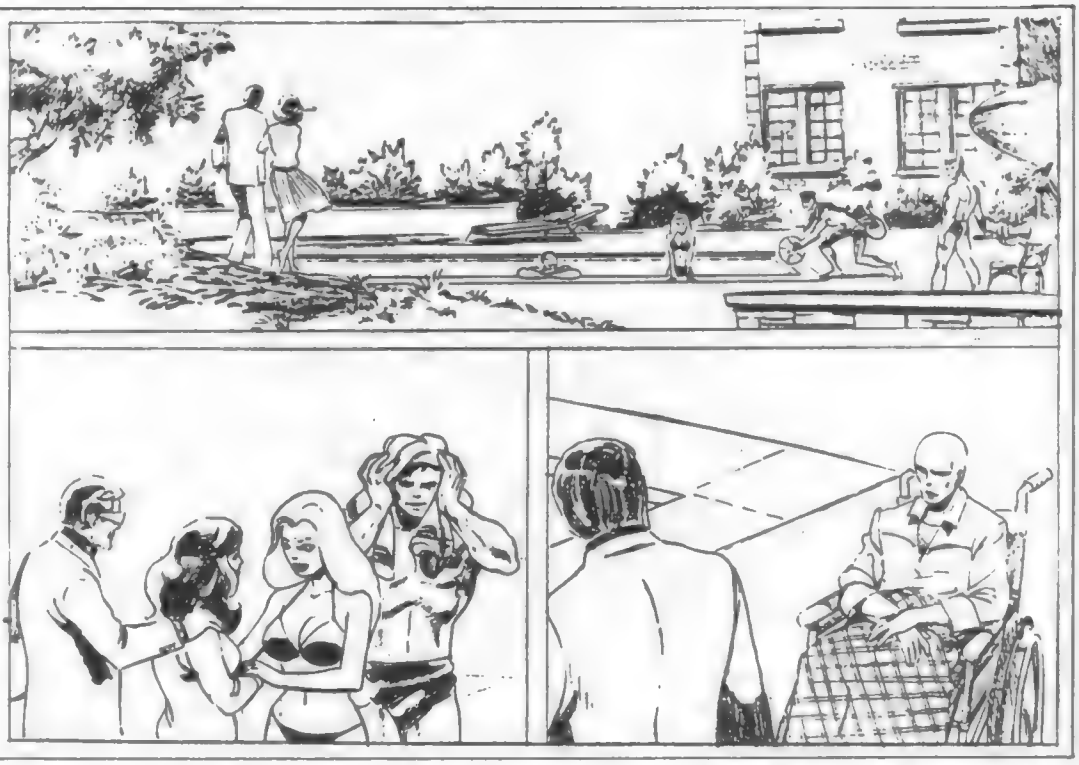

These three panels, originally the end sequence for X-Men #138 were later replaced by Jean Grey's funeral. In the original version of the preceeding issue Jean was subjected to a "psychic lobotomy" rather than the later plotted suicide. Here Scott and Jean break the news that they are leaving the team for awhile to sort out all that has happened to them.

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JAMES BOND COMIC DEAD

Marvel will not be publishing a James Bond comic book. The producer of the Bond movies, Cubby Broccoli, has withdrawn his commitment to the series. Mr. Broccoli has not seen any of the material that Cary Bates and Frank Springer (ed. Denny O'Neil's chosen creative team) had prepared so his rejection was not based upon Marvel's interpretation of the series. A Marvel spokesman said that "the decision was based upon the inability of our [Marvel's] lawyers to reach an agreement with his lawyers."

THE MARVEL MAGAZINES

Marvel Preview has been promoted to bi-monthly status and the **Howard the Duck** black and white is now quarterly. The reason for the changes in frequency is directly attributable to sales. **Howard the Duck** has not caught on as a magazine and one of the major reasons for maintaining the books is the merchandising possibilities inherent in the character. Currently a TV series and possible radio show is under discussion. In an effort to alter the direction of the book, Bill Mantlo will no longer be writing **HTD**. The scripting chores will be shared by Steve Skeates and Denny O'Neil.

To fill the added requirements of a bi-monthly schedule, two book-length stories are being prepared for **Preview**. Doug Moench and John Bolton (a popular British fantasy artist with a Frazetta-like style) are working on a King Kull story. Bill Mantlo and Val Mayerik (with the new style that he's developed over the past year) are collaborating on a 55 page story, "The Paradox."

The Marvel Universe title mentioned last issue is being treated as a major project and may well be a regular book. Like **Epic**, every detail of **The Marvel Universe** is under intense scrutiny. One of the current obstacles to the book is that a logo has not been decided upon. Editor-in-chief, Jim Shooter, has rejected an inordinate amount of logo submissions and has asked all of Marvel's letterers to submit alternative choices, from which a logo will be selected. Among the Marvel characters being considered for this showcase book are Daredevil, Dr. Strange, Iron Man and Nick Fury, Agent of Shield.

Larry Hama's **Benny Hill** magazine has been put on hold. The reason, according to a Marvel staffer, is "major conceptual differences between Marvel and Benny Hill's representatives."

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MARVEL MOVIE NEWS

The Conan movie has been delayed. Filming will not begin until this January at the earliest. With filming not beginning until next year the film will probably not be released before December 1981 or March 1982. Marvel's recently purchased animation studio is *not* currently working on any of the Marvel characters. The studio is functioning as it did before Marvel bought it, concentrating on commercial jobs.

NIGHT RIDER REVIVAL

Marvel's original Ghost Rider (now The Night Rider) is being revived in the 50th issue of **The Ghost Rider**. In issue 51, he is featured in a back-up story by Michael Fleisher and Carmine Infantino set in the old West. In issue 56, the modern day descendent of the Night Rider assumes the cape and mask of his ancestor and becomes his contemporary equivalent. There are no solid plans for the new Night Rider, although a possible Spider-Man, Night Rider team-up is being discussed.

SPOTLIGHT AND PREMIERE SET TILL '81

Editor Jim Sallicrup has solidified the lineup of the two Marvel "showcase" titles through the end of this year. Appearing in **Marvel Spotlight** will be a 3-part Captain Universe story (the popular character introduced in the **Micronauts**) by Bill Mantlo and Steve Ditko. **Marvel Premiere** will feature 3 issues of the comic book adaptation of the popular English fantasy series DR. WHO, written by Mills and Wagner, with art by Dave Gibbons

MARVEL PROMOTES IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM

The September Marvel comic books (December cover dates) will carry a message from New York City Council President Carol Bellamy, stressing the importance of immunization. The message is part of the Immunization '80 campaign which has as its goal to immunize all school children.

The Letter reads as follows:

Dear Marvel Readers:

With all their super powers, Spider-Man and the rest of the Marvel gang are powerless against diseases like polio, measles, and rubella. These diseases can cripple or even kill. But, they can also be easily prevented with painless vaccinations. In most states (including New York), it's the law: NO SHOTS, NO SCHOOL! For more information or immunization call the Immunization Hotline at (212) 349-2664. Outside New York City, call your local Health Department.

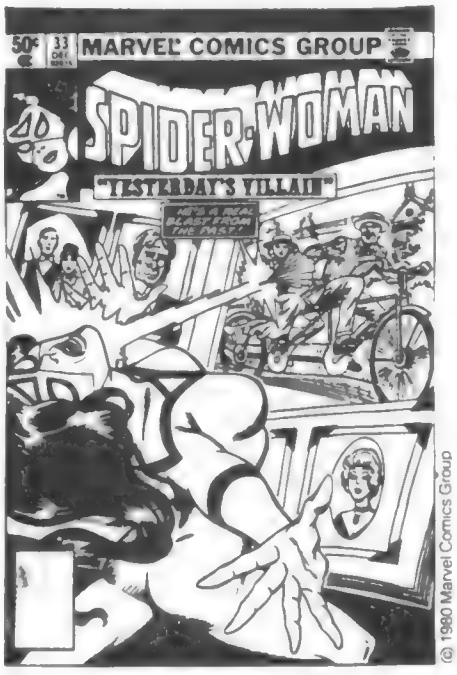
Stay Healthy!

NOTES

Roger McKenzie is leaving as Daredevil's regular writer. DD artist Frank Miller has written one issue and is under consideration for the regular scripting job . . .Trina Robbins is doing a story for **Epic Illustrated** . . .Alan Weiss may be scripting the second issue of **Sub-Mariner** in addition to handling the art chores . . .Michael Fleisher and Larry Hama have both written book-length Conan stories for **The Savage Sword of Conan** . . .Don Newton is the new **Avengers** penciler . . .David Michelinie is leaving **The Avengers** with issue 206. No replacement has been named . . .Marshall Rogers is penciling a fiill-in issue of **Dr. Strange**, written by Chris Claremont . . .**Epic 1** sold 45% which was characterized by a Marvel staffer as "good, but not great" . . .Ralph Macchio and Mark Gruenwald are leaving **Marvel Two In One** with issue #74 . . .Bill Mantlo has been awarded a Marvel contract . . .George Perez is no longer working at Marvel . . .David Kraft is writing a **Hulk Magazine** story . . .Ken Steacy is adapting a Harlan Ellison story, "Sleeping Dogs", for **Epic Illustrated** . . .Tony Isabella and Pat Broderick are doing a fill-in **Defenders** story

The English version of the Hulk, written by Kelvin Gosnell and drawn by Paul Neary and John Richardson (both former Warren artists) will appear in the back of **Marvel Super Action** 26 . . .J.M. DeMatteis is the regular **Defenders** writer beginning in issue 92 . . .The theme of the 1980 Marvel Calender is 20 years of Marvel Comics and is written by Roger Stern . . .There is a rumored report that a Japanese film company made a movie based upon Marv Wolfman's "Janus series" which appeared in the **Tomb of Dracula** comic book

Harlan Ellison announced at Phil Seuling's July Convention that he is working on a Black Widow film treatment for Marvel . . .A Spider-Man and the Hulk summer insert has appeared in the **Chicago Tribune**. The 10 page story was written by Stan Lee and Jim Shooter and drawn by Jim Mooney and Mike Esposito . . .Cyclops will leave the **X-Men** for 8 issues



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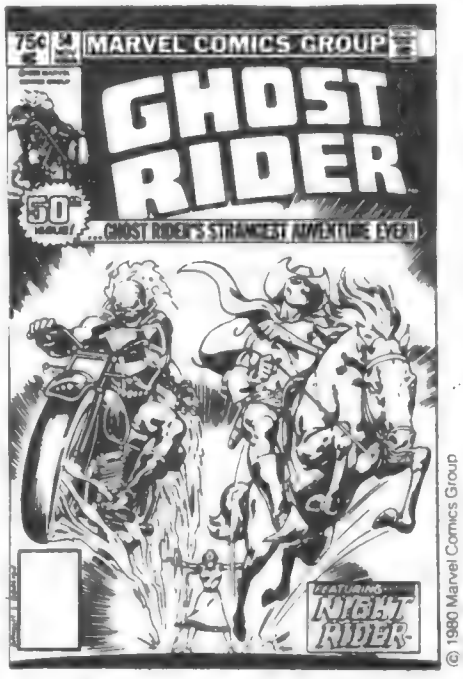

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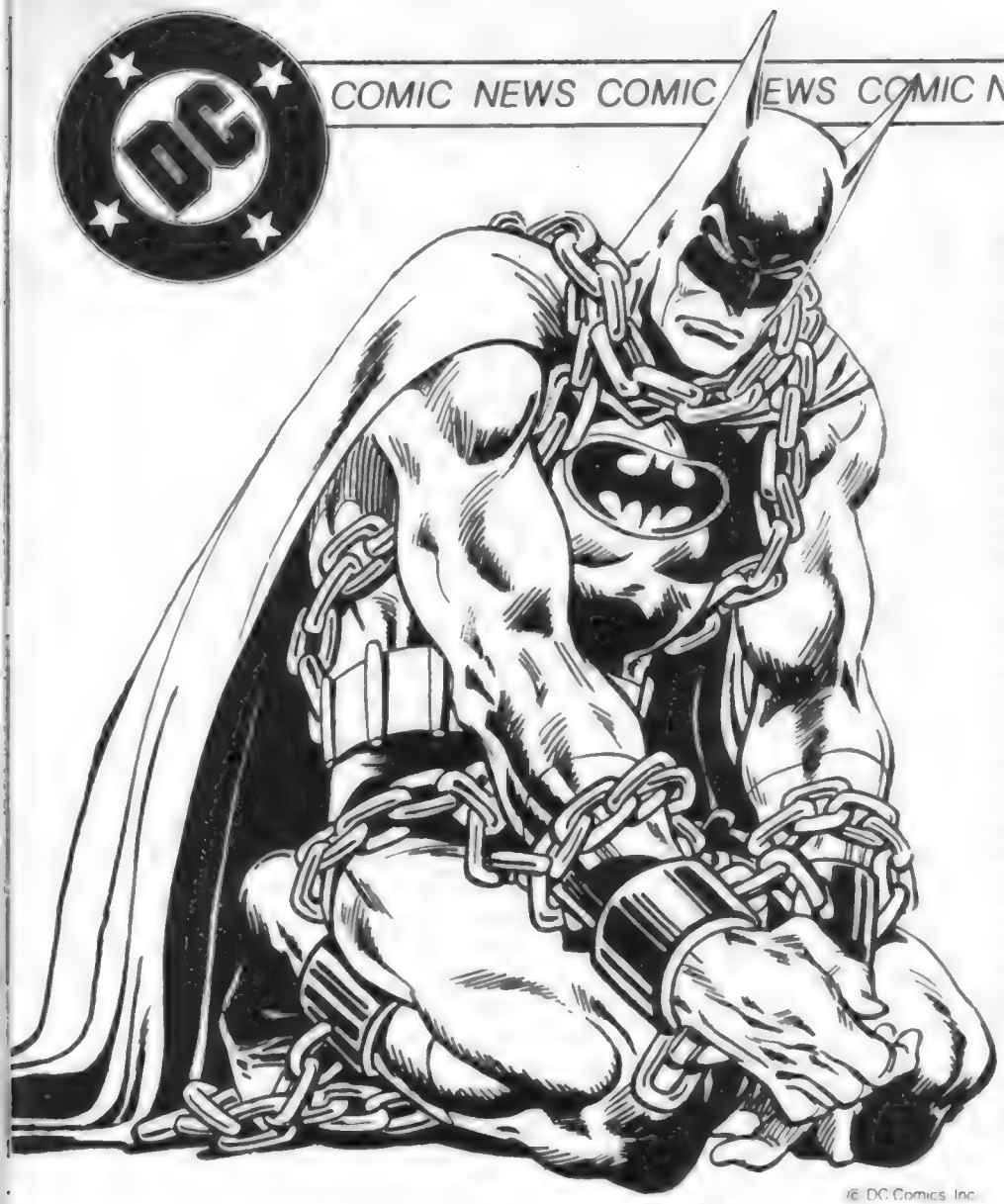

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ENGLEHART WALKS OUT ON DC

After a heated dispute over his page rate, an indignant Steve Englehart withdrew three completed scripts that were commisssioned by DC. Taken back was a 2 part, 50 page, Madame Xanadu, Deadman and Demon teamup assigned by Jack Harris as the last 2 chapters of a proposed **Madame Xanadu** mini-series and a 17 page Superman/Creeper teamup intended for **DC Comics Presents**. Marshall Rogers had been assigned to draw the Madame Xanadu story and Curt Swan had already completed 7 pages of the Superman/Creeper story when Englehart refused to permit DC to publish his scripts. As Englehart had not yet signed a release or recieved either partial or full payment for his work, the scripts were still legally owned by him. His move may very well be unprecedented in an industry where it is matter-of factly assumed by the major publishers that the people they employ to write and draw their product have little or no claim to their work, once it is submitted. Certainly the move caught DC by surprise as a DC press release dated June 15, 1980 celebrated Englehart's return to DC and his reunion with Marshall Rogers, even though DC had no legal claim to the material that they were advertising

The cause of Englehart's disaffection was a promise allegedly made over the phone to him by Jack Harris. Englehart was allegedly promised a page rate higher ($33 or more) than the top rate at DC (currently $31). Jack Harris who had initiated the project by contacting Englehart maintains that "I never quote prices. I never mention specific dollars. Editors do not have the power to quote rates, only Joe Orlando, Jenette Kahn and Paul Levitz have that authority." He also contends that he told Englehart that he "would see what (he) could do. It's a special project, maybe I can get you more." According to Englehart, Harris said, "Don't worry about the money. We didn't know if we could get you for this. This is a special project, and I'll get you more than $32."

When Englehart came to New York there was a disagreement over what Englehart's rate would

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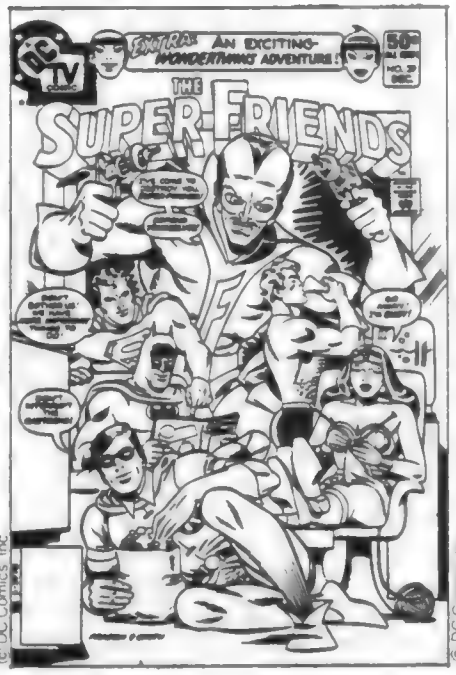

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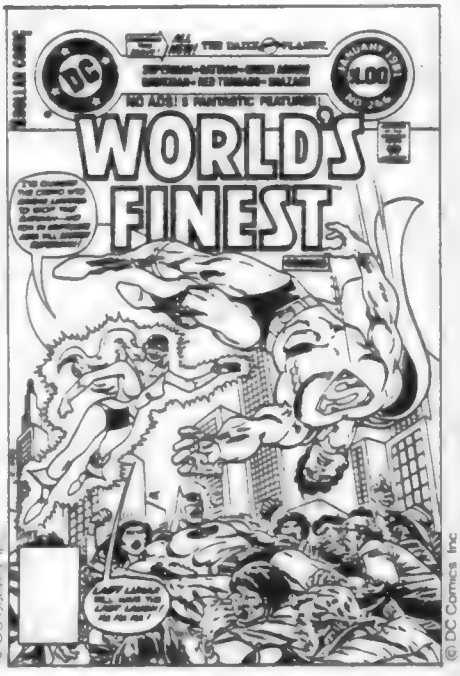

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be. After a meeting with Paul Levitz and Jenette Kahn, Englehart threatened to withdraw the scripts. After an attempt at a "verbal compromise" by Jack Harris, Englehart decided to exercise his option and reclaim his scripts. The 7 pages of artwork that Curt Swan had completed can not be used as Englehart has sold the scripts to Eclipse Enterprises. The effect that this situation will have on the possibility of any future work by Englehart for DC remains to be determined.

(For a full report on Eclipse's plans for the scripts, see the Eclipse news section. Also for more of Englehart's comments about the situation, refer to this issue's special interview: "Steve Englehart Delivers the Goods.")

SPECIAL PROJECT: DETECTIVE 500

Following a policy begun by Marvel with the final issue of **Tomb of Dracula**, the 500th anniversary issue of **Detective** will have a larger format than the regular 22 page comic. Planned is an 80 page, square-bound $1.50 edition. The book will contain a number of special features and includes material by writers who have never written Batman before. The lead story is a Batman tale entitled "To Kill a Legend" and is written by Dick Giordano. Walter Gibson, the creator of the Shadow and Blackstone's official biographer, has written a Batman text story. The story is illustrated by Tom Yeates. Len Wein and Walt Simonson have also prepared a solo Batman story for this issue.

Also in this issue is "The Too Many Crooks Caper" which features such "other detectives" as Slam-Bradley, The Human Target, Jason Bard, Mysto, Roy Raymond, Pow-Wow Smith and Captain Compass by Len Wein and Jim Aparo. Elongated Man is also represented in a story by Mike W. Barr and Jose Garcia Lopez in which the stretchable sleuth meets Edgar Allen Poe. Joe Kubert teams with Paul Levitz on "The Strange Death of Doctor Erdel", a solo Hawkman story. Deadman teams up with Batman and Robin in a story by Cary Bates, Carmine Infantino and Bob Smith.

The wrap-around cover of **Detective** 500 will be based upon a layout by Joe Kubert and rendered by all of the artists featured inside the comic.

THE NEW DIAL 'H' FOR HERO

The revived **Dial 'H' for Hero** strip is garnering a large response according to one DC spokesman. On the basis of one ad in **World's Finest** and announcements in the fan press, editor Jack Harris, writer Marv Wolfman and artist Carmine Infantino have been inundated by "a ton of submissions." The first story will be a giveaway, tucked inside an issue of **The Legion of Super Heroes** book (like the Teen Titans giveaway in **DC Comics Presents**) featuring 11 concepts from "4 or 5 people" submitted before the flood of entries. Among the 11 concepts chosen for the premiere story are two from popular fan writer Rich Morrissey.

After the entries are sorted at the DC offices, Harris and Wolfman sit down and choose which concepts will be used in the book. The best concepts like "The Flying Buttress" (a good visual character) and Harlan Ellison's "Silver Fog", will appear in the entire issue as the villains of the story. Other selected characters will appear for only a few pages as Wolfman and Harris hope to use as many concepts as possible. There will be three 8 page stories every issue and due to the story length, the book will keep a light tone and be "played for fun." Wolfman describes "a variety of submissions ranging from simple drawings from young kids to elaborate drawings including intricate costume designs and origin stories."

The stated policy is not to use characters in more than one story. But if a character is used again the creator is put on the regular DC plan and will receive 20% of royalties on the merchandising of the character.

Only people who have ideas used in the book will receive a "Dial 'H' for Hero" T-Shirt. The shirt is designed by Marv Wolfman. Coincidently DC publisher Jeanette Kahn had awarded T-Shirts as prizes for submissions when she was editing **Dyamite.** Wolfman comments that after all the hoopla, **"Dial 'H' for Hero** will either be a big hit of a big flop."

INFANTINO RETURNS TO DC

After a 14 year absence, Carmine Infantino returns as the regular artist for **The Flash** in issue 296. Infantino will be joined by permanent Flash inker Bob Smith with that issue. The story is written by Cary Bates and teams Flash with the Elongated Man (a series Infantino also drew in the 60's). Upcoming in **The Flash** will be the return of Captain Cold, Shade and the Rainbow Raider.

The only other permanent assignment for Infantino at this date is the newly revived "Dial 'H' for Hero" series in **Adventure** written by Marv Wolfman. He has completed a Deadman, Batman and Robin teamup for **Detective 500** and is currently working on a Space Museum story, written by Gerry Conway for **Mystery in Space**.

WOLFMAN AT DC: UPDATE

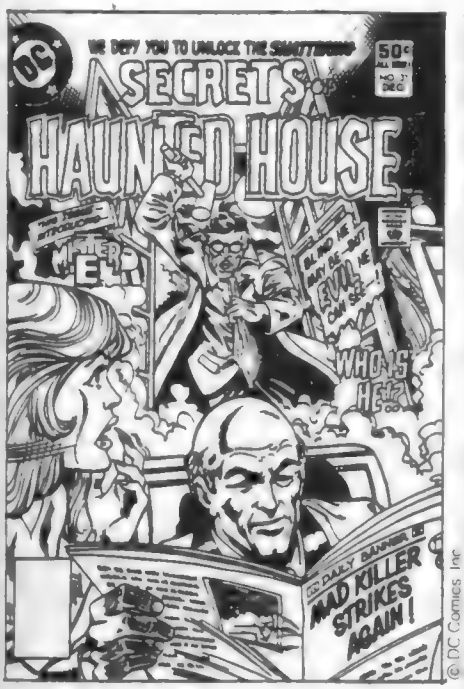
Now comfortably entrenched at DC, former Marvel editor Marv Wolfman is writing 3 regular series in addition to the newly revived **Dial 'H' for Hero** series. In collaboration with another Marvel emigrant, George Perez, Wolfman has revamped the Teen Titans into a new monthly book. The initial direction of the book will concentrate upon the reason why one of the group's three new characters, Raven, reunited the group. This complex storyline will include Raven's origin and introduce a number of new villains. Wolfman who readily admits that Perez "contributes more than 50% of the Titans", plans to use only new villains in the Titans. There are no plans to revive any of the villains from the 2 previous **Teen Titans** series

Wolfman will be scripting Superman in **Action** as Cary Bates moves over to the **Superman** book. His approach will be to write stories where "Superman uses his powers and shows why he's a super man." and have Superman's supporting cast return to their traditional relationships. Already written is a 2 part Vandal Savage story in which Superman travels through time to stop Savage from changing history. "The Return of Superman Island" and an offbeat tale where the Fortress of Solitude is turned against Superman.

The other regular series assigned to Wolfman is **Green Lantern**. He plans to lessen the difference between Hal Jordan and Green Lantern and find the original appeal of the character. Wolfman reasons that Hal Jordan was picked as a member of the Green Lantern corps because "he is a man born without fear." So he intends to concentrate on re-establishing this concept.

Green Lantern's supporting cast will be enlarged as he moves to LA (giving it a quasi-reality like Marvel's New York), returns to Carol and buys a beach side house. Wolfman also hopes to establish a solid reality to the Guardian corps: defining the Guardians rules of order, how many Green Lanterns exist and creating a Green Lantern recruitment drive (which includes soliciting Adam Strange).

Wolfman has also written 8 issues of **Batman** and a 4-part Lois Lane story (Jimmy Olsen guest-stars



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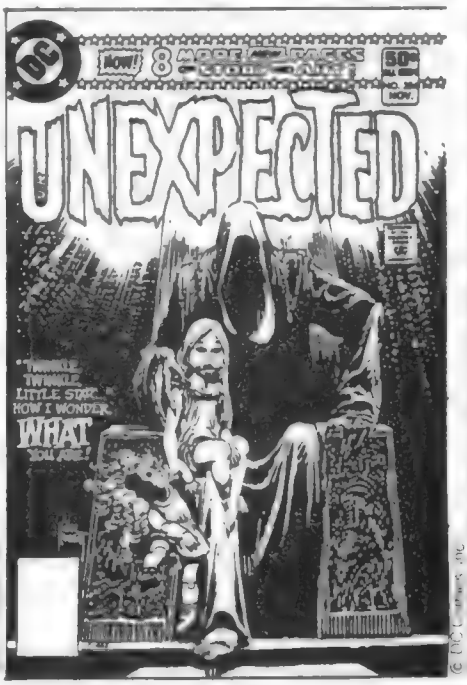

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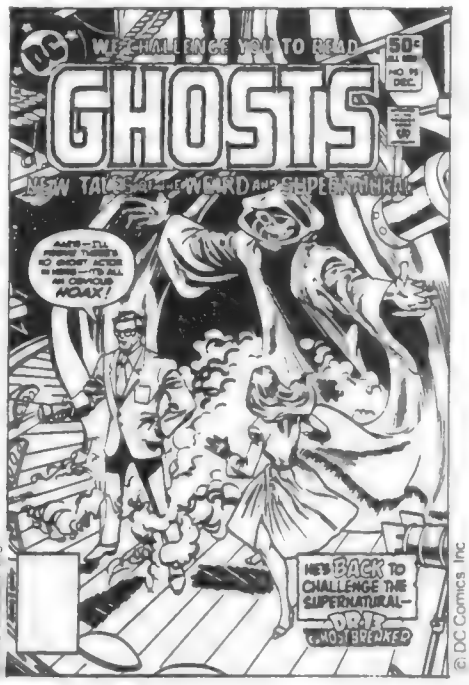

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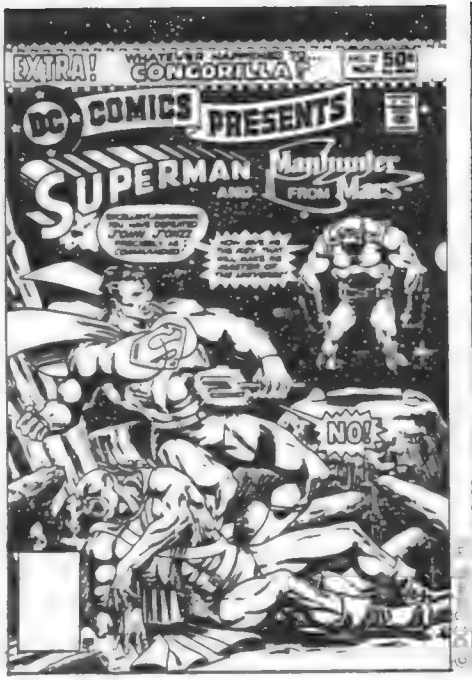
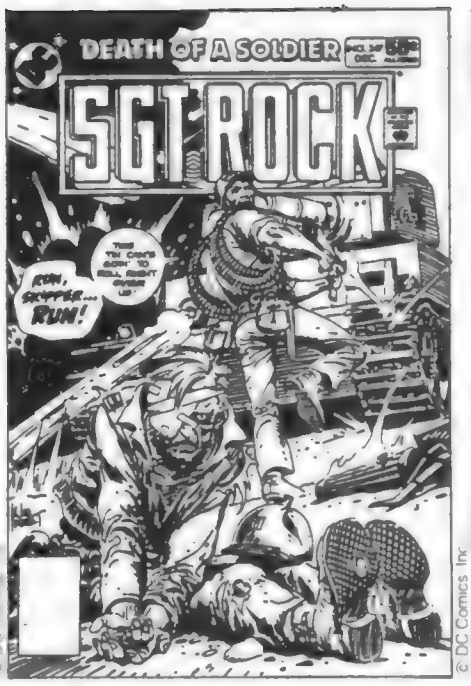
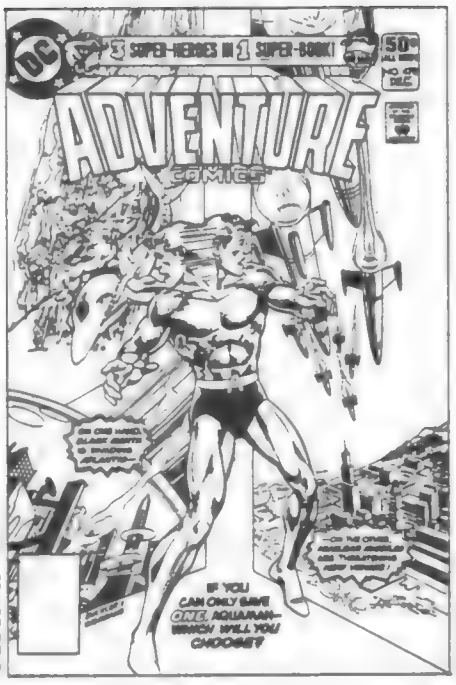
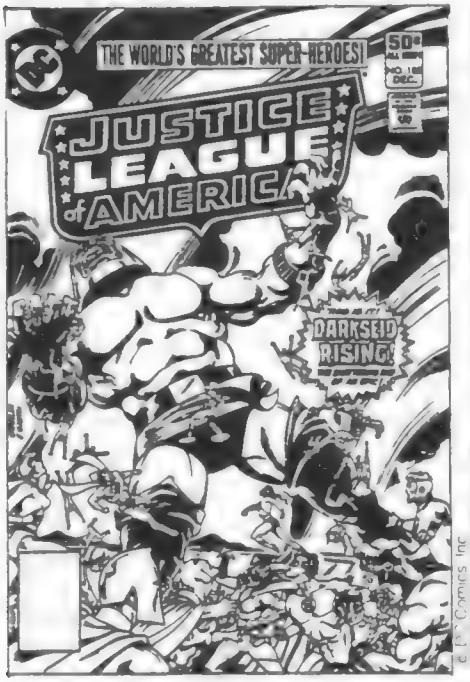
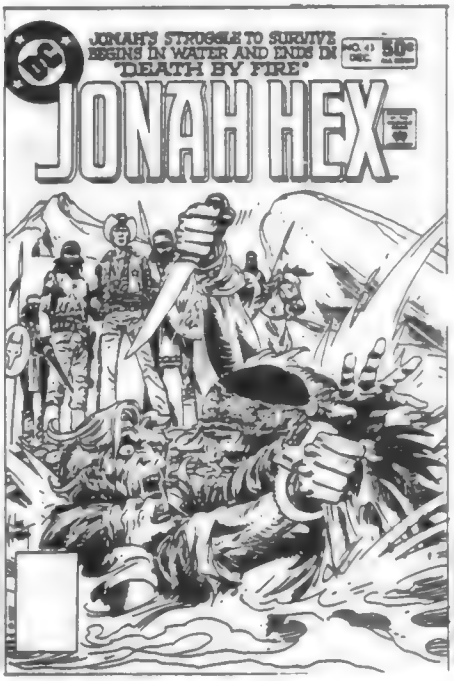
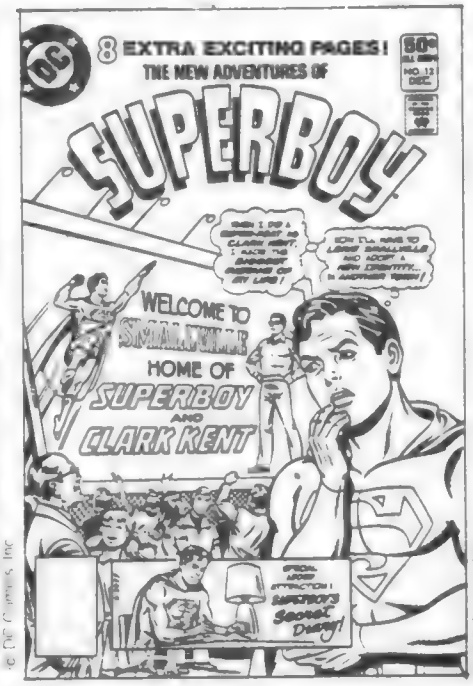












for the first 3 parts) for **Superman Family.** Wolfman's final Batman story is a 4-part Ras Al Ghul story in which Batman pursues the leader of the League of Assasins all across the world. An important sub-plot in these stories is Bruce Wayne's reaction to his ward, Dick Grayson, dropping out of college.

NEW DC MINI-SERIES

The fourth DC Comics mini-series will be the **Secrets of the Legion of Super-Heroes**. The series will reveal the origins of every member of the Legion and give a detailed account of the history of the Legion itself. The series was plotted by E. Nelson Bridwell, scripted by Paul Kupperberg with art by Jimmy Janes and Bruce Patterson. Issue #1 goes on sale October 9th

DC spokesman Jack Harris said that "there will be a Madame Xanadu mini-series using the already completed Englehart-Rogers story." But as to when that story will appear, there are no final plans

DC COMICS SHRINK TO 48 PAGES

Beginning with the September issues of **World's Finest, GI Combat,** and **Superman Family**, DC's Dollar Comics will shrink to 48 pages. Although the story content will be reduced by a few pages, the books will no longer carry ads. All dollar books will have wraparound covers.

BATMAN MOVIE DEFINITE

DC Comics Inc. announced that a Batman movie is being prepared for production. The film will be produced by Mike Uslan (editor of the reprint collections: **America at War: the Best of the DC War Comics** and **Mysteries in Space (The Best of DC Science Fiction Comics)** with Ben Melnicker serving as executive producer. No details concerning the script, the cast or the director of this project are available

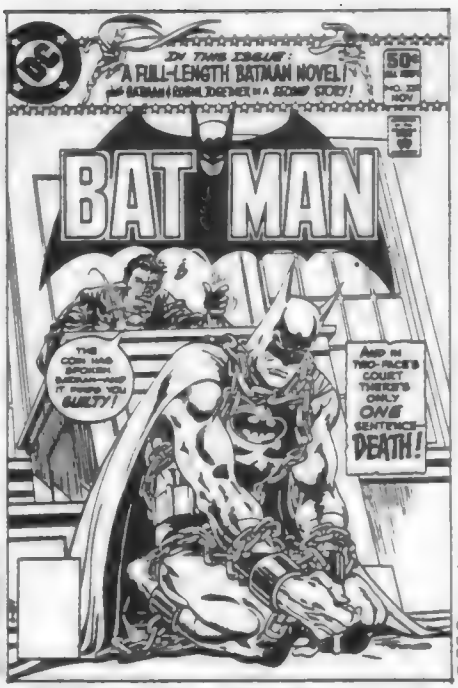
BACKUP NEWS

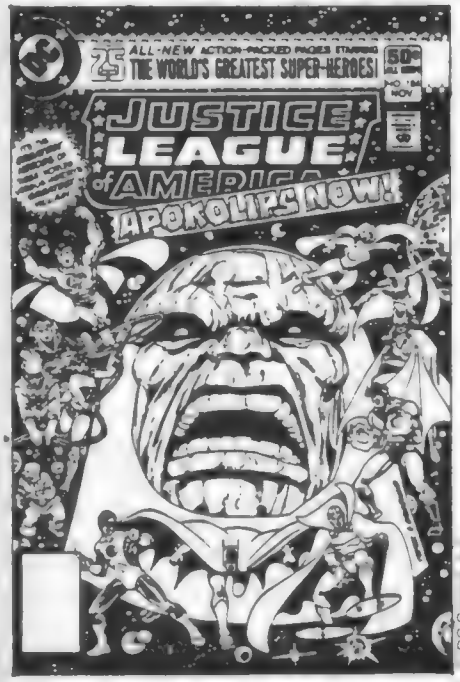
With the new **Dial 'H' for Hero** series premiering in **Adventure 481**, Plastic Man becomes the backup feature in **Super-Friends** and Aquaman moves to **Action Comics** where he replaces the Atom and Air Wave strips

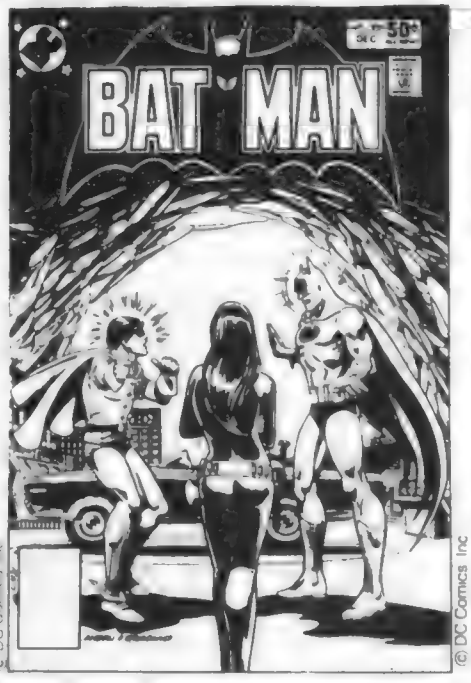
OMAC will continue as the backup feature in **Warlord** after Jim Starlin relinquishes control. The series will be scripted by Dan Mishkin and Gary Cohn with newcomer Greg Laroque handling the pencil chores

DC will have regular continuing features appearing in the pages of three mystery titles. Premiering in **Secrets of Haunted Hosue 31** is the mysterious Mr. E in "The Twice Cursed Man" by Bob Rozakis and Dan Spiegle. In **Unexpected 205**, Johnny Peril debuts in "The Second Possession of Angela Lake" by Mike W. Barr, Jack Sparling and Bruce Patterson. **Ghosts 95** marks the return of the old Phantom Stranger character. Dr. 13 in "All the Stage is a Haunt" by Paul Kupperberg, M.R Adams and Tex Blaisdell

The "Whatever happened to..." series in **DC**







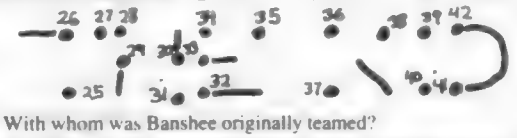
Comics Presents will reveal the fate of the Golden Age Atom, Dr. Mid-Nite, Mark Merlin and Prince Ra-Man in future issues.

DC DIGEST NEWS

The next **Best of DC Digest** will reprint the "Bat-Murderer" series by Len Wein and Jim Aparo. The digest marks the first time that the five part series which originally appeared in **Detective** has been collected together. **DC Special Blue Ribbon Digest #6** is a special **Ghosts** issue which reprints a Phantom Stranger story "Image in Wax" by Len Wein and Jim Aparo in addition to 15 other tales. Future themes for digests include a **Sgt. Rock** issue and a **Secret Origins of Super Villains** book, which will contain a new, never-before published origin of the Penguin.

NOTES

Roy Thomas will not be editing his material when he officially begins working for DC on September 1 . . . Gil Kane and Michael Tiefenbacher have finished a story for **DC Comics Presents 28**, "Whatever Happened to Johnny Thunder?", completing a storyline begun almost 20 years ago . . . . . The 300th issue of **The Flash** will contain a special 25 page story . . . "I Vampire" by J.M DeMatteis and Tom Sutton begins in **House of Mystery 290** . . . Zatanna is getting a new costume in **JLA 187** . . . Dave Cockrum is illustrating the War that Time Forgot feature for **Weird War Tales 98**. Paul Levitz and Karen Berger will be co-editing **House of Mystery**. Johnny Craig is doing a story for **Mystery in Space**. the next Marvel/DC teamup will probably be Wonder Woman and the Hulk . . . Bob Wiacek is inking a George Tuska **Mystery In Space** story . . . Steve Ditko has done a story for **Weird War Tales 95** . . . Jim Starlin is penciling three **Firestorm** backups. After that, Denys Cowan will take over as regular penciler . . . General Foods has commissioned DC to produce a line of mini-comics to be distributed as give-aways inside their cereal boxes . . . Mademoiselle Marie will appear in a solo story in **The Unknown Soldier 249** and is teamed up with The Unknown Soldier, Sgt. Rock, the Losers and the crew of the Haunted Tank in issue 250 . . . . future **DC Comics Presents** teamups include Superman and Supergirl, Superman and the Spectre (both drawn by Jim Starlin) and Superman and the Black Canary. Nemesis teams up with Batman in **Brave & Bold 170** . . . Gerald Fortran and Mike Fleisher are working on a new DC western hero . . . Joe Kubert is making an animated film, similar to his **Tor** series. He has already completed a credit sequence for a CBS TV show using computer animation . . . . . .



Guess what, bunkies! Great news! The folks here at Comics Times have had such a great reaction to our trivia quizzes that they've asked us to expand our operation. We talked it over and (since nothing would really please us more) have decided to give our faithful public more! So from now on, instead of 10 exciting questions, there'll be 20! What more could you ask for? (30?)

In honor of our expansion we've decided to experiment and give you readers an exam on everyone's favorite group of Super-Mutants, the X-Men. It's exactly what you've been expecting so have fun! But we expect you to find it slightly exasperating.

1. What is the name of the place where the X-Men live?
2. What is the name of the X-Men's private plane?
3. What is Storm's full name?
4. To what X-Men villain is Professor X related?
5. Who first developed the Sentinels?
6. Who is John Proudstar?
7. With whom was Banshee originally teamed?
8. At what rank did Wolverine resign from his Canadian service?
9. Scott Summers once had a different super identity. What was it?
10. Which X-Men (both old and new) have been members of other super groups?
11. What is Colossus' full name?
12. Who was his brother?
13. Since coming to the X-Men, Nightcrawler has faced three hired assassins. Name them.
14. What is the name of Magneto's outer space hideaway?
15. Who does Nightcrawler date?
16. What was Thunderbird doing when Prof. X asked him to join the X-Men?
17. Who is in charge of the Starcore project?
18. Where is the Ust-Ordynski collective?
19. What significance does "Jinguchi Maru" have?
20. Whose was the first body inhabited by Mutant X?

(answers on page 82)

THE INDEPENDENTS

ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES

Eclipse Enterprises has bought three completed Steve Englehart scripts originally commisioned by DC Comics. Two of the scripts that Englehart withdrew from DC (a Madame Xanadu, Deadman and Demon team-up) were intended as the last 2 parts of a 3-part *Madame Xanadu* mini-series edited by Jack Harris and to be drawn by Marshall Rogers. The other script was a Superman/Creeper team-up for *DC Comics Presents*, with art by Craig Swan. Swan reportedly had begun to work on Englehart's script. DC apparently will not be able to use any artwork that Swan completed as it is part of a story that *DC* no longer owns.

Englehart had been given the go-ahead to work on the scripts, but he never had signed a contract, binding the scripts to DC Comics. After a salary dispute (see the DC News Section and Englehart's own comments in this issue's interview, "Steve Englehart Delivers the Goods" for further details), Englehart took back the scripts and offered them to Marvel Comics. Since Jim Shooter was out of town, Englehart was told that he would have to wait until the following week before Marvel could give him a definite answer. Before Shooter returned, Eclipse publisher Dean Mullaney contacted Englehart and purchased the scripts, by immediately meeting Englehart's salary demands and by granting Englehart the standard Eclipse deal (ownership of his material and a percentage of all profits).

Marshall Rogers who supported Englehart's decision to withdraw the scripts, remains committed to the project and is now slated to illustrate all three stories for Eclipse. The stories will be rewritten and the characters altered to avoid any copyright infringement. Rogers and Englehart plan a much closer collaboration than the DC full script permitted them as they are combining elements of both the Marvel style and the full script method.

The 2 part Madame Xanadu story will appear as the lead feature in a bi-monthly book called *Eclipse*. The characters will be suitably changed so that they will clearly be the independent creations of Englehart and Rogers. To make this transition as smoothly as possible, Englehart will write an additional 10 pages, so the story will be 60 pages long when it finally sees print. One 10 page installment will appear in each of the first six issues of *Eclipse*.

Eclipse will be an anthology book featuring a number of stories every issue. In addition to the Englehart-Rogers lead feature, Don McGregor has been signed to write a regular series. Many top professionals are interested in contributing to the magazine, although Mullaney reports that no one else has yet committed themselves. As the book is still in the planning stages, no specific format or cover price has been finalized.

Marshall Rogers' first work for Eclipse, *Detective Inc.*, written by Don McGregor has just been released. Using characters created by McGregor ten years ago in a limited edition magazine he published, the square-bound, trade paperback is priced at $6.95. Included in the book is a full-processed color cover painting by Marshall Rogers. The publishers caution that the book is for mature audiences only.

Following almost immediately in August is Eclipse's fifth book, *'Stewart the Rat* by Steve Gerber, Gene Colan and Tom Palmer. This book is Gerber first comic book writing since his parting with Marvel. Same format and price as *Detectives Inc*.

Eclipse also announced that it will publish the third part of Jim Starlin's *Metamorphosis Odyssey*. Part one is currently being serialized in Marvel's *Epic Illustrated* and Marvel plans to release the second part as one of their album books. No release date has been set since Starlin has not yet begun to work on the project.

Sabre 2 will be written by Don McGregor, but will definitely not be drawn by Paul Gulacy. No artist has been named to replace Gulacy on the series.

Publisher Dean Mullaney has resigned as the editor and art director of New Media/Irjax's *Comics Feature*, effective September 1 to concentrate on the expanding Eclipse line.

All books may be ordered directly from Eclipse Enterprises, 81 Delaware Street, Staten Island, NY 10304. Be sure to include 25¢ for postage and handling.

RIP OFF INC

Underground Comix apparently are no longer the unique specialy item that they once were. According to Fred Todd, the President of the Rip Off Press, there are 30,000 pre-publication orders for the sixth issue of *The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers* (scheduled for publication in late June). Todd expects to sell 150,000 copies of the book this year.

Culled "from the archives" *Freak Brothers* #6 features the three outlaws in "The Parakeet that Outwitted the DEA", "Phineas Goes to the Store", "He Who Hesitates", "The 4th Freak Brother", "Take Me Out", and "The Death of Fat Freddy." Issue 6 also contains a 3 page Fat Freddy's Cat strip and sports front and back covers drawn by Gilbert Shelton and colored by Paul Maurides. The Freak Brother stories collected here are stories that originally appeared in *Rip Off Comix* 1 through 6.

Originally scheduled for last Christmas, the second collection of Ted Richards' *The Forty Year Old Hippie* is also new from the Rip Off Press. The book was delayed because of the Walt Disney Corporation's suit against *The Air Pirates*. Once the suit was settled, Richards was able to begin working again. *The Forty Year Old Hippie* #2 is his first product since the settlement. Featured are three major stories, "The Harvest Ball", "The Potty Monster Story" (co-plotted with Richards' four year old daughter) and "Child Person Will Be Twenty-Five in the Year 2000." Also included are the daily installments of a Forty Year Old Hippie comic strip.

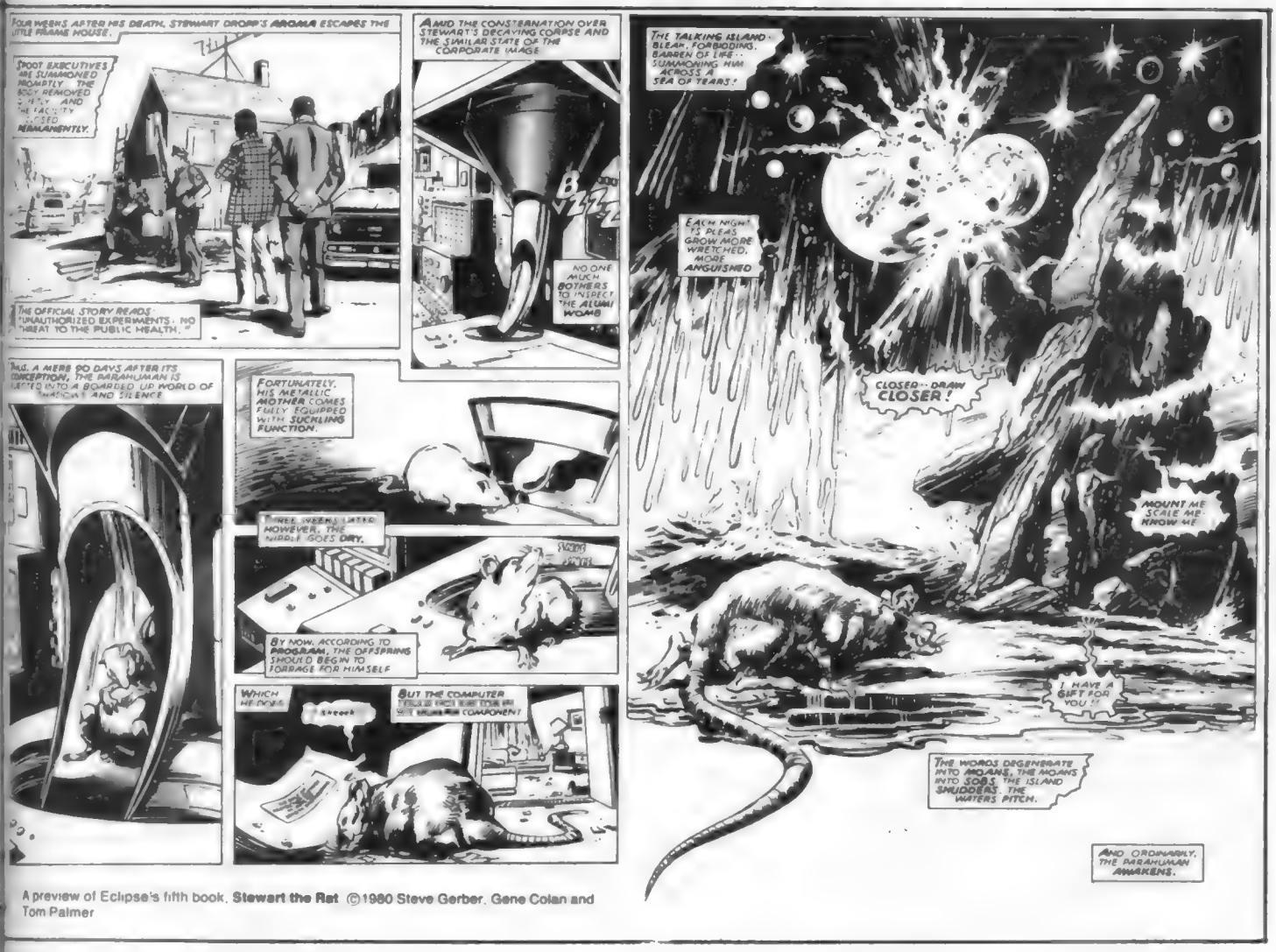
Also appearing this month is *Rip Off Comix* 6 which includes a 42 page Philbert Desanex story (Wonder Wart-Hog's alter ego), "Philbert Desanex' 100,000th Dream" by Gilbert Shelton. It is the first story where Philbert never turns into Wonder Wart-Hog. Also in this issue is a Fat Freddy's Cat strip, "Gilbert Shelton's Advanced International Motoring Tips" and a Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers story, "The Death of Fat Freddy."

New from Rip Off Books/Last Gasp Eco Funnies is Jack Jackson's (Jaxon) *Commanche Moon*, collected in its entirety for the first time. The result of three years of research, *Commanche Moon* is a book on the Southern Plains Indians, their struggle for freedom and their eventual walk down the "Whiteman's Road." The story centers around the 25 year "captivity" of a white child stolen by rampaging Commanches, Cynthia Ann Parker, and her forced return to civilization with her son Quanah. Quanah goes on to become the last leader of the Comanches in their final stuggle for the domination of the plains. Priced at $6.95, the book is a square-bound, 84 page trade paperback.

In addition to the narrative, the book also includes a section with photographs of Cynthia Ann, Quanah and their relatives and friends. Artist-writer Jackson comments, "It's a very human story . . .The life of Quanah Park is an admirable example of a person, caught between two different worlds, who was able to fill the gap."

You may order these books directly from the Rip Off Press, P.O. Box 14158, San Francisco, CA 94114. The comix cost $1.50 apiece including postage and handling. Include an extra 60¢ for postage and handling when ordering Jaxon's *Commanche Moon*.

Phineas and Freewheelin' Franklin do the best they can for their dead compatriot in this selection from *Freak Brothers* 6. © 1980 Rip Off Press and Gilbert Shelton.


FOUR WEEKS AFTER HIS DEATH, STEWART DROPP'S AROMA ESCAPES THE LITTLE PRAIRIE MOUSE.
SPOOT EXECUTIVES ARE SUMMONED PROMPTLY. THE BODY REMOVED SWIFTLY AND THE FACILITY CLOSED PERMANENTLY.
THE OFFICIAL STORY READS: "UNAUTHORIZED EXPERIMENTS. NO THREAT TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH."
AMID THE CONSTERNATION OVER STEWART'S DECAYING CORPSE AND THE SIMILAR STATE OF THE CORPORATE IMAGE
BZZZZ
NO ONE MUCH BOTHERS TO INSPECT THE ALUMI WOMB
THUS, A MERE 90 DAYS AFTER ITS CONCEPTION, THE PARANUMAN IS LAUNCHED INTO A BOARDED UP WORLD OF MAGICAL AND SILENCE
FORTUNATELY, HIS METALLIC MOTHER COMES FULLY EQUIPPED WITH SUCKLING FUNCTION.
THREE WEEKS LATER, HOWEVER, THE NIBBLE GOES DRY.
SQUEAK
BY NOW, ACCORDING TO PROGRAM, THE OFFSPRING SHOULD BEGIN TO FORAGE FOR HIMSELF
WHICH HE DOES.
SNEAK
BUT THE COMPUTER
COMPONENT
THE TALKING ISLAND - BLEAK, FORBIDING, BARREN OF LIFE... SUMMONING HIM ACROSS A SEA OF TEARS!
EACH NIGHT, ITS PLEAS GROW MORE WRETCHED, MORE ANGUISHED.
CLOSER... DRAW CLOSER!
MOUNT ME. SCALE ME. KNOW ME.
I HAVE A GIFT FOR YOU!!
THE WORDS DEGENERATE INTO MOANS, THE MOANS INTO SOBS. THE ISLAND SHUDDERS. THE WATERS PITCH.
AND ORDINARILY, THE PARANUMAN AWAKENS.

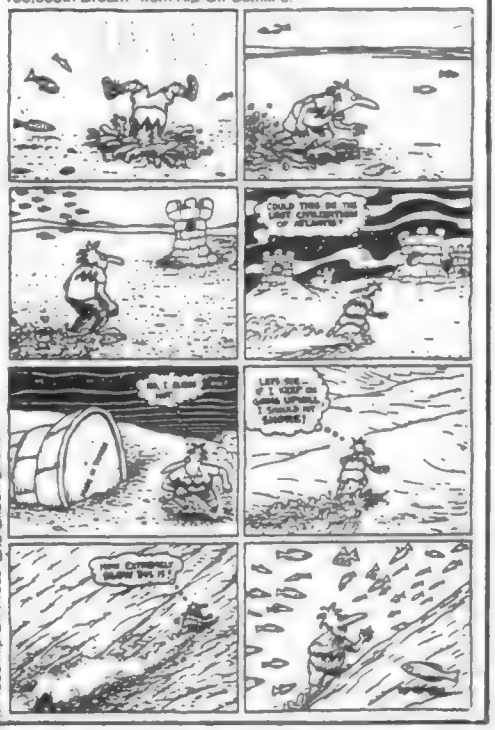
A preview of Eclipse's fifth book, **Stewart the Rat** ©1980 Steve Gerber, Gene Colan and Tom Palmer

Ted Richards refuses to excuse incompetence in these two strips from the second issue of *The Forty Year Old Hippie*.

© 1979 Ted Richards.
THE FORTY-YEAR-OLD HIPPIE
By TED RICHARDS
AHHH - THIS IS IT! "A PEACEFUL EASY FEELING"
BOOOOOM
WELL... IT WAS GROOVY WHILE IT LASTED...

The Forty Year Old Hippie
By TED RICHARDS
I GOTTA GET OFF THIS PLANET SOMEHOW...
MAYBE IF I FOCUSED MYSELF UPON THAT STAR AND JUST SORT OF "JUMPED"?
AHHH! MY BODY WANTED TO SPLIT, BUT SOMETHIN HELD ME BACK!
WHY DIDN'T YOU LET HIM GO?!
NO ONE'S LEAVING HERE 'TIL THEY CLEAN UP THIS MESS!

a section of Gilbert Shelton's wildly surreal "Philbert Desanex' 100,000th Dream" from *Rip Off Comix* 6.


COULD THIS BE THE LOST CIVILIZATION OF ATLANTIS?
LET'S SEE... IF I KEEP ON GOING UPHILL I SHOULD HIT SUMMIT!
HOW EXTREMELY BIZARRE THIS IS!!
© 1980 Rip Off Press and Gilbert Shelton.

WARREN

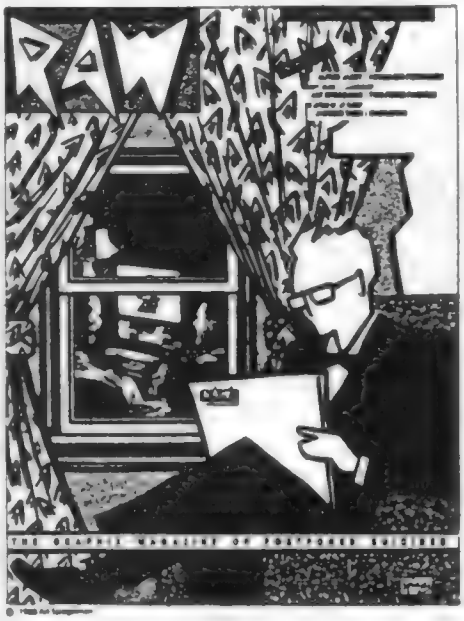
Despite its huge inventory, Editor Will Richardson has commissioned a new series for *Vampirella*, *The Mist*, written by Don McGregor. *The Mist* is planned as a continuing series and is described as an "adult contemporary horror story focusing on a middle class family." The titles for the first three stories are "A Public and Private Surveillance", "Blood Cycles" and "A Mist on the Horizon." The series will concentrate on a working wife and her husband as they try to cope with unemployment, inflation, sexual roles, parenthood and the responsibilities of the marriage relationship. A horror element disrupts the normal pattern of their lives, but unlike most comic series, the lead character slowly evolves over the course of several stories into the persona which finally characterizes the entire series.

Series creator McGregor comments, "Whereas many contemporary horror stories use sympathetic characters to merely mutilate and brutalize, hopefully this series will be more compassionate and affectionate . . .The major difficulty I see here is getting enough pages to allow the story to focus on the normal lives of the major characters as well as on the horror elements."

However *The Mist* series is an exception as editors Richardson and Chris Adames are literally deluged under material. By almost exclusively using inventory stories, the editors hope to decrease the lag time between when a story is completed and when it sees print.

Among the stories resting on the Warren shelf is a massive two-part Don McGregor story about the Loch Ness monster. Originally commissioned in the summer of 1979, when Louise Jones was still Editor, the story (written in full script form) is broken into two chapters. Neither chapter one "Loch Ness Lament" (24 pages) or the 50 page second chapter "Sweetwater Nessie and the King Kong Syndrome" have been assigned to an artist.

Alex Toth, who recently quit his animator job at Hanna-Barbera is inking at Warren under the pseudonym, A. Toz. The "Bravo for Adventure" series which Toth was writing and drawing for *The Rook* magazine, concluded in the fourth issue. Toth is primarily using his "pen name" when he is inking Leo Duranona's pencils, but in the September *Creepy* (issue 123), a Carmine Infantino story is inked by A. Toz.



Just out is Art Spiegelman's new magazine *RAW*, "The Graphix Magazine of Postponed Suicides." Edited by Francoise Mouly and Spiegelman, the first issue features twenty-three short pieces including: "Manhattan" by Jacques Tardi, "I'll Play the Blues for You" by Joost Swarte, "The Andy Griffith Show" by Josh Alan Friedman and Drew Friedman, "Can Street" by Gerry Capelle, "Industry News and Review No. 6" by Mouly, a translation of Alfred Jarry's "Hommages Posthumes", "Vamp Dance" by Kaz, "Dead Things" by Mark Beyer, "Jack Survives" by Jerry Moriarty and "Fifi Gaga Magazine" by Bazooka.

Also in *RAW* 1 is a new 10 page Spiegelman color comic book (stapled into the centerfold), "Two Fisted Painters", and a 1906 *Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend* strip by Windsor McCay.

"I wanted to make a comic book that you could read on the subway without feeling embarrassed," explained Spiegelman, "We wanted to stay away from the usual underground look and display cartoons differently, so they'd attract an adult audience. By that, I don't mean one devoted to sex topics; I just mean people who read books and go to movies."

RAW's oversize format (10 x 14, 36 pages) is similar to a new wave music magazine. Scheduled to appear "between 2 and 4 times a year" (the second issue is scheduled for November) there are as yet no subscription rates. Issue 1 may be ordered for $3.50, plus 50¢ postage and handling.

RAW books also publishes a number of small 8 page booklets by Spiegelman, Beyer and others. For more information or to order *RAW* write to: RAW Books, 27 Greene Street, New York, NY 10013.

CHAPTERS

SHOWCASING THE FINEST IN CONTINUITY COMIC STRIPS

With the appearance of its second issue, *Chapters*, published by Leo Giroux, Jr. and edited by Richard Howell and Carol Kalish, has established itself as the only regularly published comic strip reprint magazine. *Chapters* is dedicated to the preservation of the continuity comic strip form and is intended as a reaction against the decline of the continuity strip. At the moment *Chapters* reprints ten strips each issue:

Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates* (dailies and Sunday) from January 1938, in which elements of the wartime Terry begin to emerge. To show Caniff's progression as an artist, *Chapters* is reprinting the rare cartoony-style Sunday pages from 1935 that introduced the Dragon Lady.

Leonard Starr's *On Stage* (dailies and Sunday) from the beginning of the strip in February 1957, which has never before been reprinted.

Peter O'Donnell's and Enrique Romero's *Modesty Blaise* (a two week sequence in every issue) from 1978.

E.C. Segar's *Thimble Theatre* (two weeks of daily continuity) beginning with the "Addynoid Islands" adventure from September 1931.

Harold Grey's *Little Orphan Annie* (dailies only) from 1929, preceeding the Dover book (*Little Orphan Annie and the Great Depression*) by about a year.

Charles Moulton's and H.G. Peter's *Wonder Woman* (dailies only) from 1942. This strip is a unique merging of comic book storytelling with the comic strip format as it is a direct, panel-by-panel adaptation from stories which originally appeared in the *Wonder Woman* comic book.

Frank Robbins' *Johnny Hazard* (a two week daily sequence in every issue) from the third adventure in 1945.

Roy Crane's *Buz Sawyer* (dailies only) from the beginning of the strip in 1955.

Russ Manning's *Tarzan* (dailies only) from 1968.

Gus Arriola's *Gordo* (dailies only) from the beginning of the strip in 1955.

Along with the strip reprints, *Chapters* also has a 4 page text section., An unpublished novella by Lester Dent, "The Flamethrower" featuring Lynn Lash, is currently being serialized.

Chapters is looking to expand its lineup. Three strips under serious discussion for inclusion are the *Alley Oop* dailies (from the beginning of 1939), the daily and Sunday *Dick Tracy* strip from the late 30's and *Brenda Starr* (both the daily and Sunday strips)

The magazine is priced at $1.25 per copy and the current introductory subscription rate of $10.00 per year expires Sept. 1980. You may order by mail from *Chapters*, 4 Brattle Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

WaRP graphics

The latest from WaRP Graphics is *Elfquest* 7: "The Dreamberry Tales." Cutter and Skywise continue their search for other kindred Elftribes that may dwell in the unexplored lands beyond the desert. Story by Wendy and Richard Pini, art by Wendy Pini. Available from WaRP Graphics, 2 Reno Road, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603.

I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT MY LEETAH... SHE'S A LOVELY FLOWER WITH SWORD BLADES FOR PETALS...
...A WELL-SPRING THAT NEVER RUNS DRY--
--BUT ALWAYS LEAVES YOU THIRSTY FOR MORE!
SHE HAD THE STRENGTH TO REFUSE ME DESPITE RECOGNITION...
WHY DIDN'T SHE?
©1980 by WaRP Graphics.

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM PRESS

Now monthly, Dave Sim's *Cerebus* is one of the longest running alternative comics. The July issue, number 18, features a book length story, "Fluroc", written and drawn by Dave Sim. Priced at $1.25, it is available from Aardvark-Vanaheim Press, 221 Queen St. S., No. 1401, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G1W5.

Still available from the Museum of Cartoon Art is the first reprinting of the *Terry and The Pirates* Raven-Evermore adventure. Priced at $4.00 apiece (a limited special edition, autographed by Milton Caniff costs $5.00), the book may be purchased from The Museum of Cartoon Art, Comly Ave, Port Chester NY 10573. Be sure to include 50¢ for postage and handling.

The Li'l Abner exhibit, "Dogpatch U.S.A., the Art of Al Capp" will continue at the Museum until the end of August.

The latest members to be voted into the Hall of Fame at the Museum of Cartoon Art are Al Capp (Li'l Abner) and Chic Young (Blondie).

HEAVY METAL

The September issue (Vol. 3, #16) of *Heavy Metal* includes a Berni Wrightson back cover painting, Paul Kirchner's "Shaman", Phillipe Druillet's "Salammbo", Bilal's "Progress", the conclusion of Moebius' "The Alchemist Supreme", Ernie Colon's "Zeitgeist" and an interview with Phillipe Druillet.

The October issue will be a special rock issue. Among the features will be a *Trashman* strip by Spain, "Jimi Hendrix" by Tom Yates, "Rock City" by Moebius and a comic strip biography of Elvis Presley by Dick Matena entitled "Heartbreak Hotel."

Howie Chaykin is working on a 4 page color Gideon Faust story for *Heavy Metal*. The story is not scheduled as of yet.

The First Kingdom

Book 12 of Jack Katz' *The First Kingdom* was released last month. "To Create a Deity" marks the halfway point in Katz' magnum opus. To celebrate this achievement Katz provides a map and glossary of his fantasy world and a picture of each major character to make it easier of follow his complex story. Also in this issue is an appraisal of Jack Katz by Burne Hogarth. The Book is priced at $4.25 and is available from Bud Plant

Honkytonk Sue

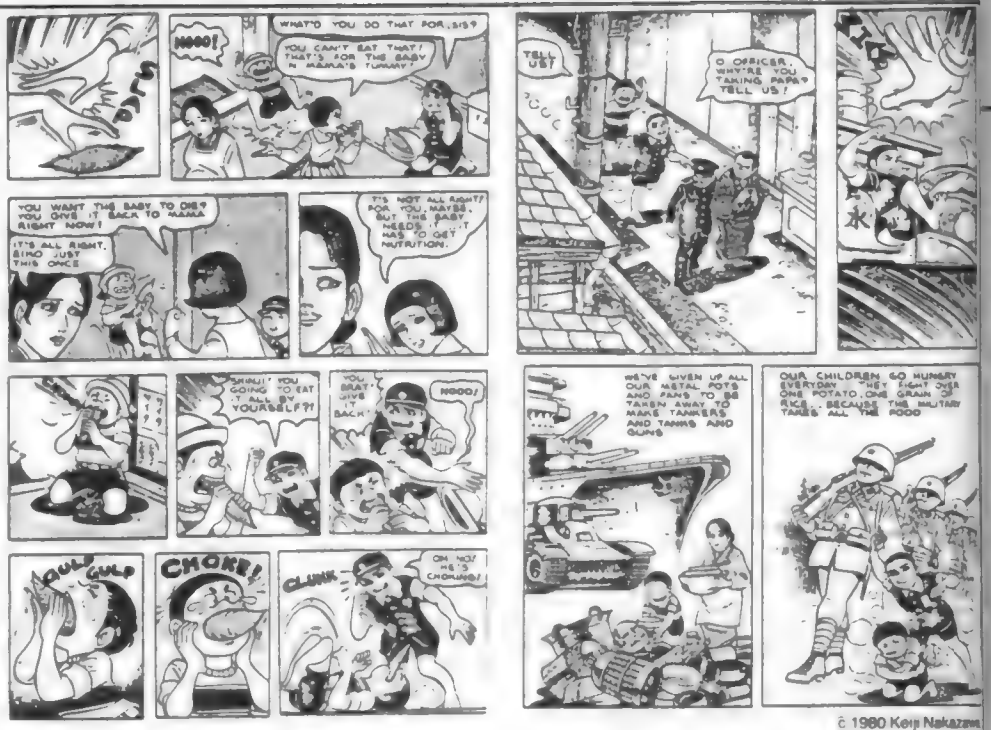
Due out in August is the third issue of *Honkytonk Sue*,, the Queen of Country Swing. Written and drawn by Bob Boze Bell, Honkytonk Sue makes the rounds of the Arizona honkytonk circuit in her own inimitable way. Issue 3 ($1.75 cover price) titled "Trigger to Ride" features the country and western reuniting of the Beatles. Still available are issues 1 and 2 (priced at $1.50 and $1.75 respectively). Order from: Honkytonk Sue, 707 W. Mackenzie, Phoenix Arizona 85013. Be sure to include 50¢ for postage and handling.

EDUCOMICS

Leonard Rifas continues his republication of the Japanese epic Keiji Nakazawa's *Gen of Hiroshima* with the second issue now at the printers. The second installment introduces a Korean character (Mr. Pak) and deals with Japanese anti-Korean /anti-Chinese racism. the story length has increased to 56 pages.

Coming soon is *Food Comix/Food Comics* as a two-covered comic book. The first half of the book features educational material concerning various aspects of food and food production. Some of the topics covered are the causes of hunger in the world, the decline of black ownership of US farmland and the effects of sugar. The rest of the book is lighter in tone and features talking vegetables, recipes and a superhero strip.

A free catalogue describing a wide selection of these "new trend" comic books is available by writing to Educomics, Box 40246, San Francisco, California 94140.


WHAT'D YOU DO THAT FOR, SIS?
NOOO!
YOU CAN'T EAT THAT! THAT'S FOR THE BABY IN MAMA'S TUMMY!
YOU WANT THE BABY TO DIE? YOU OWE IT BACK TO MAMA RIGHT NOW!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, BIMO JUST THIS ONCE
IT'S NOT ALL RIGHT! FOR YOU, MAYBE, BUT THE BABY NEEDS IT AND HAS TO GET NUTRITION.
TELL US!
O, OFFICER, WHY'RE YOU TAKING PAPA? TELL US!
SHINJI! YOU GOING TO EAT IT ALL BY YOURSELF?!
YOU, BRAT! GIVE IT BACK!
NOOO!
GULP GULP
CHOKE!
CLUNK
OH, NO! HE'S CHOKING!

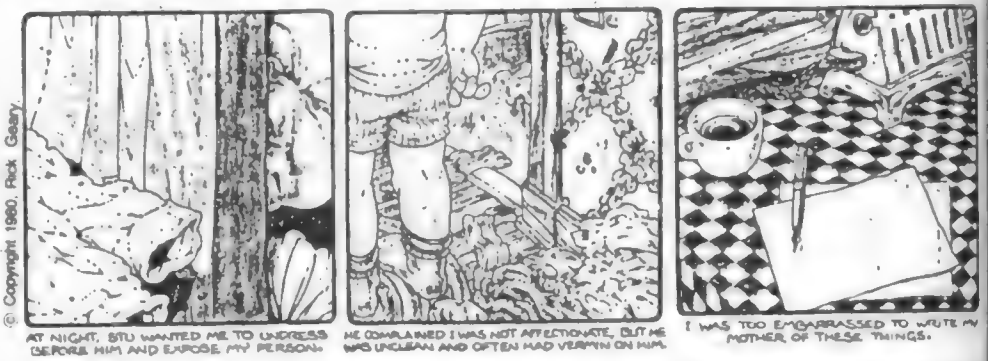
WE'VE GIVEN UP ALL OUR METAL POTS AND PANS TO BE TAKEN AWAY TO MAKE TANKERS AND TANKS AND GUNS
OUR CHILDREN GO HUNGRY EVERYDAY. THEY FIGHT OVER ONE POTATO, ONE GRAIN OF RICE... BECAUSE THE MILITARY TAKES ALL THE FOOD

© 1980 Keiji Nakazawa

National Lampoon

National Lampoon has expanded its "Funny Pages" section to eight pages beginning with the August "Anxiety" issue. Featured will be Gahan Wilson, B.K. Taylor, Ron Barrett, Shary Flenniken, Rick Geary, Russ Heath, Sid Harris, Gerry Capelle, David Simpson and Ralph Reese. All of the regular features including Bobby London's "Dirty Duck" and Spain Rodrigues' "Little Inspirational Tales" will be continued. Added to the section is newcomer Holly Tuttle and her one page strip, "All You Can Eat."

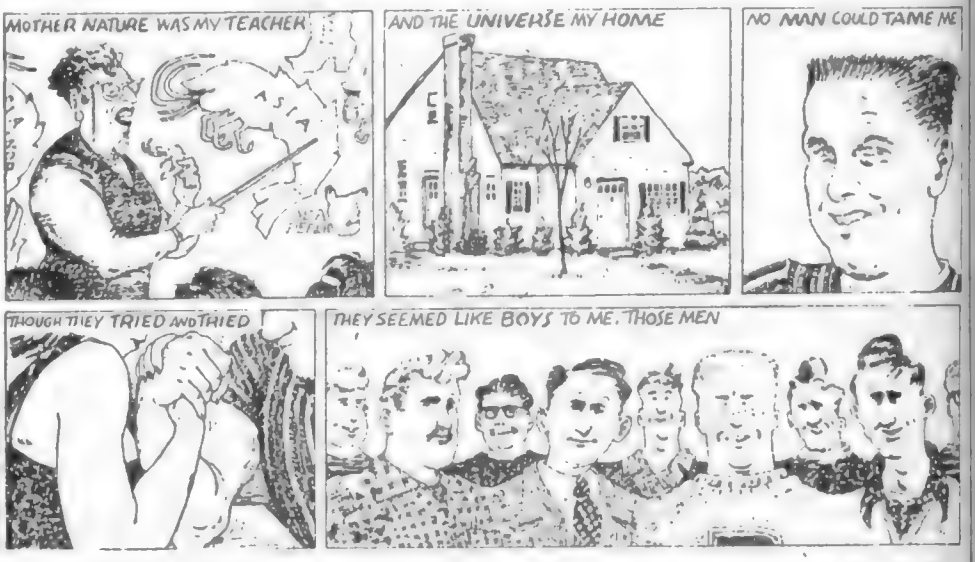
The August issue also features interior strips by M.K. Brown, Joe Schenkman and Ron Barrett.


© Copyright 1980, Rick Geary
AT NIGHT, STU WANTED ME TO UNDRESS BEFORE HIM AND EXPOSE MY PERSON.
HE COMPLAINED I WAS NOT AFFECTIONATE, BUT HE WAS UNCLEAN AND OFTEN HAD VERMIN ON HIM.
I WAS TOO EMBARRASSED TO WRITE MY MOTHER OF THESE THINGS.

Krupp Comics

The contents for the fall issue of *The Spirit* (#25) have been finalized. Appearing will be a postwar Sand Saref story, "Jewel of Gizeh." This episode is the first part of a 7 part story. Warren's *Spirit* magazine reprinted the last six parts, but neglected to include "Jewel of Gizeh." Also featured in *Spirit* 25 will be "Coot Gallus" an election story in which a bum gets elected President, Chapter 7 of "Life on Another Planet", "The Public Interest" a new 3 page story in which Eisner comes out strongly against nuclear power, and Chapter 5 of the Wally Wood "Denny Colt on the Moon" series and a prewar Spirit tale in which he is captured by the underworld.

The success of Will Eisner's new art portfolio, "The City", is paving the way for a second portfolio from him. This portfolio however will more than likely be destined for the European market because of Eisner's huge following there. More than half of the initial printing of "The City" is being sold in Europe. A Danish publisher is very interested in producing a second Eisner portfolio.


MOTHER NATURE WAS MY TEACHER
ASIA
AND THE UNIVERSE MY HOME
NO MAN COULD TAME ME
THOUGH THEY TRIED AND TRIED
THEY SEEMED LIKE BOYS TO ME, THOSE MEN
© 1980 M.K. Brown

OTHERS

St. Martin's Press has just published "a different kind of comic book", *Viola Careme* by Adam Gopnik and Jack Huberman. The book tells a somewhat doctored version of the events surrounding Waterloo in which Careme, the chef for Talleyrand, Czar Alexander I and Baron Rothschild single-handly engineers Napoleon's downfall at Waterloo while saving civilization from the horrors of fast food.

Viola Careme is the first of a proposed series of books. At least two more books are tentatively planned. *Encore Careme* and *Toujours Careme*. *Voila Careme* is an oversized, 47 page softcover book and is priced at $4.95. It may be ordered from St. Martins's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

© 1980 by Gopnik & Huberman.

Available from Tom Ahern and Diana's Bi-monthly Press is a punk comic, Gary Panther's *Okupant X*. Panther, a Hollywood artist, has illustrated the covers for three Frank Zappa albums and has a regular cartoon in *Slash*, the LA punk tabloid. Okupant X, the book's lead character, appears on a stage replica of the industrial section of Dal-Tokyo. He is in black face, wears mismatched socks and searches for a liquor store to buy "Cubist Cola." The absurdist story relates his struggle with monsters created from media myths and audience expectations. Priced at $2.00 *Okupant X* may be ordered from Diana's Bi-monthly Press, 71 Elmgrove Avenue, Providence RI 02906. Include 75¢ for postage and handling.

★ ★

One of the features of Phil Seuling's Comic Art Convention was a cartoon concert, *The Joe Show*, by the creator of *Punk Magazine*, John Holmstrom. Holmstrom combined his own voice-over narration with recorded music by such artists as Blondie, the Ramones and Iggy Pop to tell a story with cartoon characters on photographic slides. Mr. Holmstrom describes the show as "the existential struggle of a loony misfit trying to survive the biting social satire and bittersweet complexities of today's socio-political forces out of control." This cartoon concert is one of the first to emerge since the untimely death of Vaughn Bodé.

YET, MAY THIS SPRING OF HOPE PROVE TO BE A FALSE SPRING" ALREADY, SMALL CLOUDS OF WAR RE-GATHER ON THE HORIZON. THE GAME IS NOT YET UP. NAPOLEON, IN EXILE ON ISLAND OF ELBA, STILL PLOTS HIS RETURN...
ALRIGHT, FELLAS — CONCEPT: WE GO BEFORE THE PEOPLE OF EUROPE WITH A FRESH BOLD IMAGE. THE NEW MEGALO-MANIA! STRONG ON TYRANNY, BUT WITH A TOUCH ANTI-STEAM POWER PLANK THROWN IN TO APPEASE THE RADICALS!
NO... I WOULD NEVER WORK... THE AGE OF CONSENSUS DESPOTISM IS OVER...
SAY A ROTTEN LITTLE THIRD-RATE INVASION OF PORTUGAL AND THEN THIS "JUMP NAPOLEON" MOVE SETS GOING PEOPLE HAVE BEEN WAITING PORTUGAL FOR YEARS... IT DON'T START WITH US!
OH, I HAD A NATEFUL DAY FOR US ALL WHEN "OUR MAJESTY" PUT ON THE IMPERIAL PURPLE
HE'S RIGHT. I SHOULD HAVE REMEMBERED: PURPLE SLACKS ON A SHORT PERSON ARE ALWAYS A BIG MISTAKE

A Ron Cobb collection is being prepared with a projected release date of October 1, 1980. Cobb has contributed to such films as *Dark Star*, *Star Wars*, *Alien* and the new *Conan* movie as a costume and set designer. The book will consist of Cobb's paintings drawings and conceptual studies as well as articles by directors Dan O'Bannon (*Alien*) and John Milius (*Conan*). Entitled *Ron Cobb's Colorvision* the entire 84 page paperback will be in full color. The collection is being produced by Sea Gate Distributors.

★ ★

The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, Inc. announced a new 3 year course in cinematic animation starting in September. Although no specific details were given about the course or the "experienced professionals" that serve as instructors, the school is licensed by the New Jersey Dept. of Education. Other courses at the Kubert School include classes in cartoon illustration, graphic arts and a Saturday morning cartoon sketch class. For more information, write the Joe Kubert School at 45 Lehigh Street, Dover, NJ, 07801 or call (201) 361-1327

★ ★

Marv Wolfman and George Perez are preparing a comic series for Flying Buttress Publications. Titled Janus (no relation to the character that appeared in Wolfman's **Tomb of Dracula** series) the story is set in a new Dark Age where science no longer exists. Asmodeus (Satan) has returned to Earth and the hordes of Hell are slowly taking over the world. Janus, the half son of Asmodeus comes to Earth to stop his father and assumes the body of a jazz musician Jason Fleet. An epic struggle between father and son ensues which will stretch over four books. Each book will be divided into 6 seven page chapters and the fourth book will serve as a prequel to the series describing how the world shifted into the new Dark Age.

Wolfman and Perez plan to produce one book a year, although each book is planned as a separate entity as there will be no cliffhanger endings. No inker has been set for the book as Perez may want to ink his own pencils. **Janus** is based upon an idea that Wolfman originally proposed to DC with Neal Adams, 15 years ago. At that time the lead character's name was Gabriel.

No specific publication date has been announced, although the book will probably appear early next year.

Wolfman is also working on a Dracula prose novella for New Media/Irjax. The storyline will involve a teamup of Dracula and Jack the Ripper.

Close Up

Paramount Pictures and Walt Disney Productions have scheduled a tentative release date for their musical version of *Popeye* of Dec. 1980. Directed by Robert Altman (*M*A*S*H, Nashville, McCabe and Mrs. Miller, The Long Goodbye* and many other films) and written by cartoonist Jules Feiffer (*Little Murders* and *Carnal Knowledge*, among others). The movie is based on E.C. Segar's 1936 *Thimble Theatre* sequence in which Popeye searches for his father who abandoned him 30 years ago.

The film is co-produced by Robert Evans Productions, (who produced *Chinatown, Marathon Man* and *Urban Cowboy*) and Walt Disney Productions. Rock and pop songwriter-vocalist Harry Nilsson is writing a thirteen song score and overture for the movie. In addition to winning two Grammy Awards, Nilsson sung the theme song for *Midnight Cowboy*, "Everyboy's Talkin", has scored two films (*Skidoo* and *Jenny*) and wrote the theme song for the TV series *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*.

The cast includes Robin Williams as Popeye, Shelley Duvall (who has appeared in four previous Robert Altman films) as Olive Oyl, Paul L. Smith (the Turkish jailer from *Midnight Express*) as Bluto, Paul Dooley (the father from *Breaking Away*) as Wimpy, Ray Walston (*Damn Yankees, My Favorite Martian, South Pacific*) as Popeye's father Poopdeck Pappy and ten month old Wesley Ivan Hurt (Altman's grandson) as Swee'pea. Roberta Maxwell, MacIntyre Dixon and Donald Moffat also appear.

Because of the overwhelming success of *Superman* and the *Star Wars* movies, Hollywood has a number of comic related films in production. Paramount is gambling that today's audience is searching for escape from all of life's ill which make us feel inadequate and helpless. "The timing is right for *Popeye*", says Evans. "It's a celebration of the little guy." ■

all photos © 1980 Paramount Pictures Corp. and Walt Disney Productions

The one-eyed sailor takes a drag from his corncob pipe

©King Features Syndicate

The quiet little seaport town of Sweethaven, run by Bluto

POPEYE

A menacing look from Popeye s chief rival Bluto

Olive Oyl, the perennial victim. E.C. Segar's parody of the perfect woman as portrayed by SHELLY DUVALL.

Wimpy (PAUL DOOLEY) about to sample a culinary delight.

In true John Wayne fashion, Popeye saunters into Roughouse's Cafe, a sleazy waterfront diner. Note the forearms as big as bar bells

all photos (c) 1980 Paramount Pictures Corp. and Walt Disney Productions

Close Up

In what is probably the most comprehensive television and motion picture package ever negotiated for a single comic strip, King Features announced that the *Flash Gordon* strip is the subject for a major motion picture and a TV movie. Dino De Laurentiis' live action *Flash Gordon* movie is in production in London. The movie, budgeted at approximately $35,000,000.00, is scheduled for release in December 1980. Universal Studios will distribute the movie in the United States and Canada.

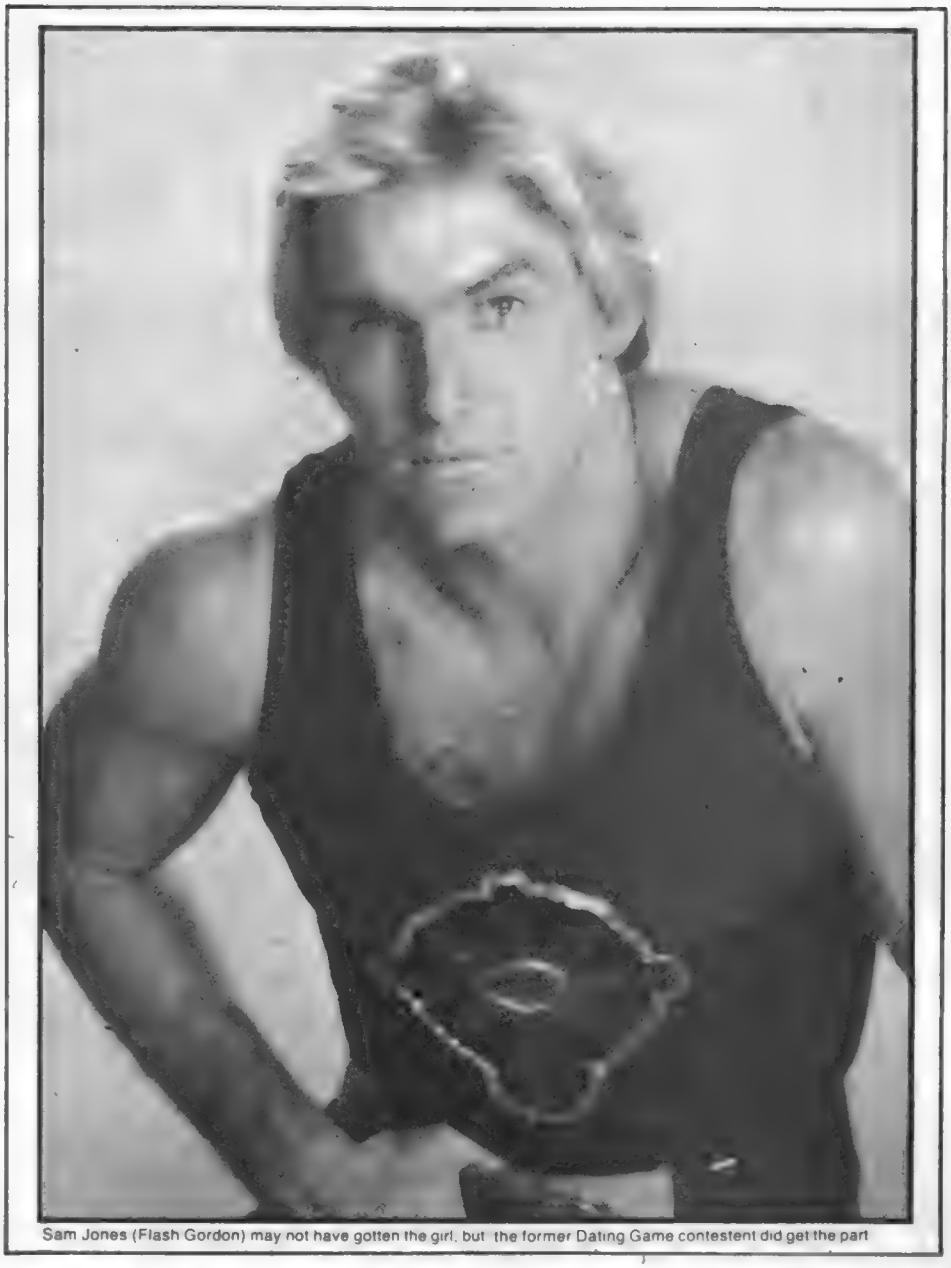
Filmation Studios, which is already producing 24 half hour episodes of an animated *Flash Gordon* cartoon (currently being aired on the NBC network), will produce a 90 minute, prime time special to be telecast as an NBC Movie of the Week in December 1980.

De Laurentiss' *Flash Gordon* is estimated to be the fourth highest budgeted movie of all-time according to *Variety*. The film is directed by Mike Hodges (*Get Carter*) after first choice Nicholas Roeg left because of conceptual differences. The screenplay by Lorenzo Semple Jr. (the *Batman* TV show) is set in contemporary times, but is reported to be faithful to Alex Raymond's original concepts.

Flash Gordon, originally portrayed in the 30's serials by swimming hero Buster Crabbe, is played by Sam Jones. Jones, an unknown, was spotted by De Laurentiis on *The Dating Game*. Canadian newcomer Melody Anderson is cast as Dale Arden and Chaim Topol plays a modern-looking Dr. Zarkov. The European actor Max Von Sydow (*Wild Strawberries*, *The Seventh Seal*, Etc.) with his shaved head and Mandarin-type moustache looks appropriately malevolent as Ming the Merciless. The rest of the cast includes Ornella Muti as Princess Aura, Timothy Dalton as prince Barin, Brian Blessed as Vultan and Mariangela Melato as Kala. A new character Klytus, a masked right hand man to Emperor Ming, is played by Peter Wynegarde.

De Laurentiis has rented space at two London studios, Elstree and Shepperton, and has also converted an unused aircraft construction hanger into a fully-equipped sound stage for out-size settings and flying sequences. "Is an enormous film," says Dino, who includes *Death Wish*, *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* and *King Kong* among his credits. "When Superman fly everyone think it terrific. My film has hundreds of men flying about in one scene; is the most fantastic sequence ever seen." (*LA Times 10/7/79*).

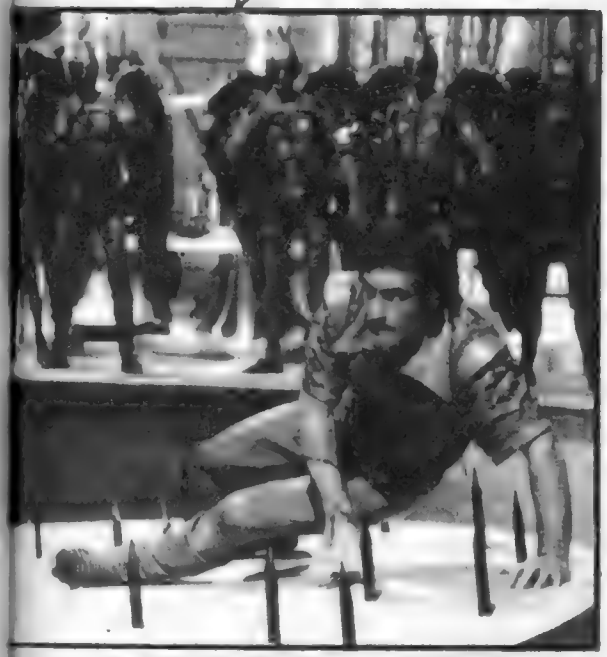
Filmation's *Flash Gordon* marks the first time in the studio's history that it has devoted an entire animation unit to a single project (Filmation won an Emmy for its animated *Star Trek* series). The project features mostly full animation, "with an minimum of limited work." "Working on *Flash Gordon* has been very exciting," says Bob Kline (Filmation's story board director and former contributor to *Fantastic Fanzine*), "There's some fantastic rotoscoped stuff where we really capture the subtle looks and haughty attitudes of the characters, and yet some of the straight ahead animated action stuff is just surprising: I was really thrilled to see the pencil tests. I'm so used to seeing what we usually do for Saturday morning, it's very refreshing to see our animators' capabilities put to such extensive use." (*Millimeter, 7/79*). ■



Sam Jones (Flash Gordon) may not have gotten the girl, but the former Dating Game contestent did get the part

Kala and Klytus, the trusted servants of Ming the Merciless.

FLASH GORDON



Prince Barin (Timothy Dalton) prepares for the worst in the gladiators circle.

Barin, Dale Arden and Flash are looking at something very large (though probably not as large as the $30 budget of this serial remake).

All photos © Universal Pictures Syndicate and Famous Films B.V. Amsterdam

The royal family of Mongo: Emperor Ming (Max Von Sydow) and Princess Aura (Ornella Muti).

The Emperor lashes back.

Welcome Back Bugs

© Warner Brothers 1980

by Jerry Beck and Will Friedwald

Animated cartoon fans who have been waiting for a renaissance of full animation features and shorts may well have their way during the eighties. The most exciting news of all is the reactivation of the Warner Brothers cartoon studio, with pioneer director Fritz Freleng in charge of production. Freleng was head animator at the original Warners studio when it first opened fifty years ago this month.

When founders Hugh Harman and Rudy Ising left Warners for greener pastures in 1933, Freleng became Warner's first credited short feature director. He retained this position for almost four decades.

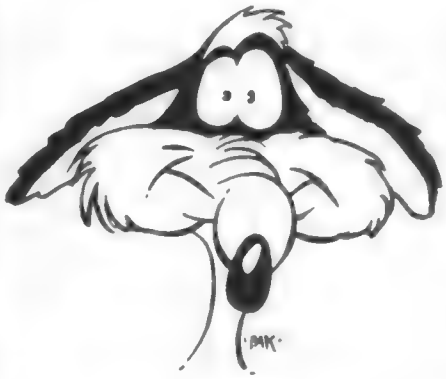
Freleng paved the way for Warner's other "star" animation directors. Tex Avery, Frank Tashlin, Bob Clampett and Chuck Jones, all contributed to the creation of such cartoon stars as Porky Pig, Daffy Duck, the Roadrunner and Coyote, Sylvester, Tweety and, of course Bugs Bunny. The Warner "family" was extremely popular and well-received commercially but was ignored by the Academy of Motion Picture Sciences and critics until recently. Today, just about everyone agrees that the Warner Characters and individual cartoons are among the best ever made.

During its heyday in the thirties and forties, the Warners Studio produced a total of over eight hundred and fifty cartoons, encompassing all of the cartoon genres.

There were thirties-style fantasies, which could often rival the best and worst of Disney like Frank Tashlin's *Wholly Smoke* (1938) and Chuck Jones' *Tom Thumb in Trouble* (1940), political satires like Norm McCabes' *The Ducktators* (1942) and Bob Clampett's *Russian Rhapsody* (1944), and musical cartoons like Tex Avery's *I Love to Singa* (1936) and Rudy Ising's "Merry Melodies" series.

Some of the most interesting cartoons contained movie star caricatures. Individual personalities often starred in their own cartoons. Some of the more notable appearances include Crosby and Sinatra in Tashlin's *The Swooner Crooner* (1944), "Bogey Gocart and Laurie Becool" in Bob Clampett's *Bacall to Arms* (1946), and "Eddie G. Rob 'em-some" in Tex Avery's *Thugs With Dirty Mugs* (1939).

Entire films were often based on brief appearances by dozens of Hollywood



celebrities, usually in a night club or a party setting. Freleng's *The Coo Coo Nut Grove* (1936) and Avery's *Hollywood Steps Out* (1941) are two such examples. Well known jazz stars Abe Lyman and his Californians appeared in *One More Time* (1931) and Rudy Ising and Shorty Rogers made their animated debuts in Freleng's *Three Little Bops* (1957).

Movie genre spoofs like Clampett's *Buckaroo Bugs* (1941), Jones' *Duck Dodgers in the Twenty Four and a Halfth Century* (1953) and the many Bob McKimson TV show parodies such as *Stupor Duck* (1956), *Boston Quackie* (1957) and *China Jones* (1959) also scored with viewers.

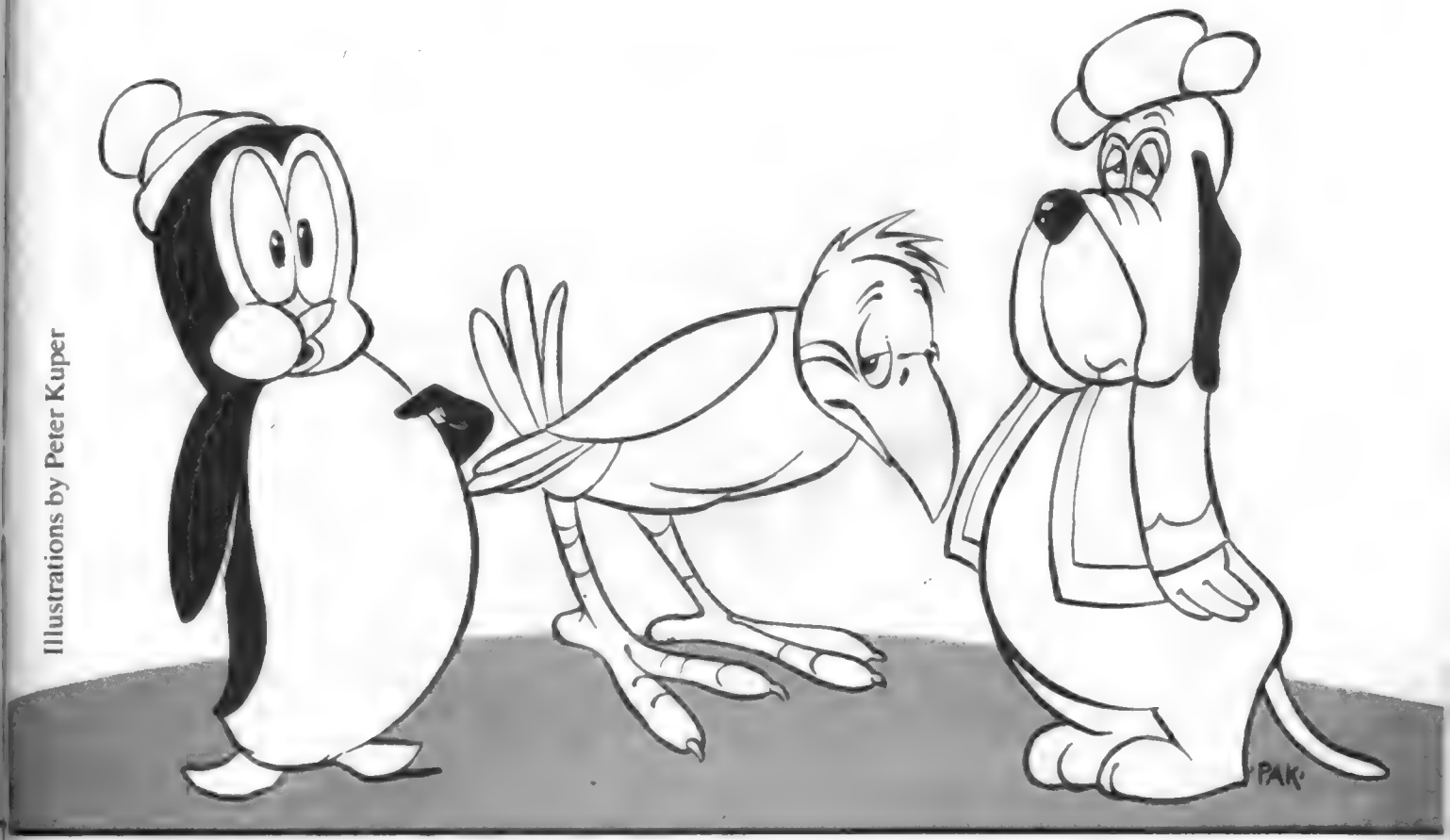
The studio was responsible for many experiments in style and design. Avery's *Page Miss Glory*, (1936) and Jones' *The High Note*, (1960) are two radical experiments of note. Also popular was the "books-and graphics-come-to-life" theme. Some of the more successful cartoons of this type include Rudy Ising's *I Like Mountain Music* (1933), Freleng's *How Do I Know It's Sunday?* (1934) and *Lights Fantastic* (1942), Tashlin's *Speaking of the Weather* (1937) and *You're An Education* (1938) and Clampett's *A Coy Decoy* (1941) and *Book Revue* (1946).

It was the Warner Studio that first found a viable alternative to the cute and sentimental techniques popularized by the Disney studio in the thirties. Warner staffers Tex Avery and Frank Tashlin were the first to incorporate live action techniques, wild compressions of time and space and surreal distortions of reality into animated films which enabled Warners to pioneer an entirely new way to make people laugh. The combination of unprecendented artistic freedom and producer apathy made Warners the first cartoon studio to allow its directors to develop their own individual styles.

Shortly after Warners' commercially successful precedent other Hollywood

studios began adapting to the new style, some by hiring away much of the original Warners staff. Top storymen Bugs Hardaway and Jack Miller drifted off to the Walter Lantz and George Pal studios, respectively. Frank Tashlin left animation for good in 1946. Finally Tex Avery left Warners to start his own unit at MGM in 1943.

The advent of television and rising production costs forced Warner Brothers to close their cartoon studio in 1963. At that point only Chuck Jones, Bob McKimson and Fritz Freleng remained. Jones formed his own studio which produced the "Tom and Jerry" theatrical shorts and a little later, TV specials for



Illustrations by Peter Kuper

characters © Warner Brother 1980

MGM. Freleng teamed with producer David DePatie to form DePatie-Freleng Enterprises, with Bob McKimson as one of their top directors.

In addition to turning out "Pink Panther", "Ant and the Aardvark" and others for United Artists, DePatie-Freleng produced shorts starring Warner stalwarts Daffy Duck and Speedy Gonzales. Warner Brothers, apparently having second thoughts about the termination of the world's greatest animation studio, had leased the studio space to DePatie-Freleng in 1964. But these films often lacked the punch of their predessesors. Freleng had abandoned directing by the mid-sixties, and his staff, consisted largely of ex-designers and animators rather than experienced directors, had neither the budget nor the know-how to do anything better.

It didn't help much when Warners officially re-opened their studio in 1968 with Lantz veteran Alex Lovy in charge. With Lovy and Bob McKimson directing shorts like "Merlin the Magic Mouse", "Cool Cat" and others, the Warners' characters were forgotten as quickly as they were created. The studio shut its doors once again, seemingly for good, in 1969.

The familiar Warners characters remained in limbo throughout the early seventies, except for an awful TV special *Daffy Duck Meets the Groovie Ghoulies* (Filmation, 1972) and Jones' *Electric Company* Roadrunner spots. Freleng continued to produce theatrical cartoons for United Artists, as well as various TV specials and Saturday morning series at DePatie-Freleng.

In 1976, Chuck Jones finally made the first serious effort at reviving the Warners characters with a series of disappointing TV specials including *Carnival of the Animals* and *A Connecticut Rabbit in King Arthur's Court*. Both films starred Bugs Bunny in his first major role since 1963. Jones' special drew big ratings and so led to 1979's *The Bugs Bunny/Roadrunner Movie*. Now Warners is convinced that there is a market for new animated cartoons.

But those who think a return to the halcyon golden age of animation is coming may be disappointed. Many animation pioneers are no longer working: both Frank Tashlin and Bob McKimson are gone. Tex Avery retired from theatrical animation in 1955. Bob Clampett (whom the authors consider the single greatest cartoon director) has remained inactive in animation since the late forties.

It would seem that Freleng and Jones are the only two capable veterans left, though they both have weaknesses. Jones, in particular, needs a strong story to build his films upon, and since the retirement of collaborator/writer Michael Maltese, Jones' work has suffered greatly. Freleng has always depended heavily on a good soundtrack to inspire him, whether it is a solid Warner's score, or the endless repetition of Mancini's "Pink Panther Theme".

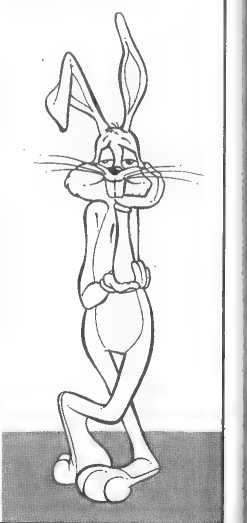
Also, there seems to be no one around to fill the shoes of the late Carl Stallings. Even Mel Blanc, once the greatest voice man in Hollywood, is beginning to sound less and less like Bugs Bunny.

But while all these are certainly serious drawbacks, one can hope. The two main problems, time and money, appear to have been overcome.

Freleng was commisioned by Warners to do several specials: *Daffy Duck's Looney Christmas Tales* (1979) included Jones' new Roadrunner segment and Freleng personally directed portions of *Daffy Duck's Easter Show* (1980). Aside from several "Pink Panther" entries like *Pink Christmas* and *Pinkolympics*, this was Freleng's first crack at directing in some time. This return to the fold left Freleng with the desire to direct theatrical shorts again. His chance came when Warners offered him the position of Senior Executive Producer of the new Warner Brothers Cartoons, Inc.

DePatie-Freleng has given way to the new Warner Brothers cartoon studio. The new company will produce theatrical shorts, TV specials and *The Second Bugs Bunny Movie*, a feature to be released later this year. The 1980's appear to be headed towards something entirely new and different, but the best news of all is the return of some old friends.

Welcome back Bugs! ■



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There began to be decisions made not by Stan Lee as the top of a bunch of creative people, but by Stan Lee as the bottom of a bunch of businessmen. And he began to really put his energy up into the business end of it rather than down into the creative end below. And the corporate influence became greater and greater.

This is a story that you hear in every industry. Record companies say the same thing. Movies! The conglomerates are the story of the '70s, as far as I'm concerned.

They began to say, "Next year you have to make 10 percent more profit." And they didn't care how you did it. They didn't have the slightest concern with what was in the books, they were just interested in the bottom line.

So we began to start hearing, "Well, you can't do that anymore. We know you did it, and we know it sold, but we prefer to make it a little simpler, a little smoother now," and things like that.

It came to a head in April of '76 when Gerry Conway became the editor for just three weeks. He called me up and said, "I wrote *The Justice League* when I was at *National*. I'm the editor at *Marvel* now and I want *The Avengers*." And I said, "Hey, I've been writing it for 4½ years, and it's been selling." And he said, "Yeah, but I'm the editor. I've got the power and I'm taking it." And I said, "Well, like hell. I don't have to put up with this."

I had no plans ever to leave *Marvel*. I mean, I wanted to be a *Marvel* comic writer. We used to laugh at *DC*, and I found myself in a real sort of schizophrenic thing, sitting there sort of watching myself saying "Well, then fuck you, I quit." And part of me was shrieking "Do you realized what you're doing?" Because I was cutting myself off, right there.

But *DC* wanted me. *DC* at that time was changing publishers and looking for new ideas and new directions. Fortunately for me, it worked out just fine.

I should point out that I wasn't the only one to whom this happened. I mean, Conway took away Gerber's *Defenders* and he cancelled both of McGregor's books. I mean, he did a pretty thorough housecleaning, and a lot of people, like Gulacy and Starlin, quit during those three weeks. So it wasn't just me.

"...There began to be decisions made not by Stan Lee as the top of a bunch of creative people, but by Stan Lee as the bottom of a bunch of businessmen..."

I'd done my job, and I wasn't going to be pushed around for some power trip. I was so blown out by the whole thing, that it actually had come to that.

But for two years, it had been getting worse, and it was getting to be less fun. So I said, "Okay, I'll go to *DC* for a year, and I'll blow out every last bit of comic book energy that I've got, and then I'll get out of this business. I'll go to Europe like I've always said I will and when I come back I'll begin to write novels," which is exactly what I've done.

So I went to *DC*, and I told them, "I want to write The Batman because I want to write The Batman, and I want the Justice League because it needs it: it needs some new blood. And I'll deliver for you." And they said fine. And I did. I left after the year was up.

DAVE: When you started the Justice League #139, you did a back up story, but in #140, you came to the fore, when you re-introduced the Manhunter concept.

STEVE: Well, that was Kirby's concept.

DAVE: He created it in *1st Issue Special*, but you developed the concept. Did you intend to write it as simply a two or three story piece, or did you envision carrying it further into some cosmic constant that was just never used?

STEVE: No. Although I had never written the *DC* characters before, I had done their take-offs in an old *Avengers*, with the Squadron Sinister as guest stars. And I had done The Shroud, for *Supervillain Team-Up*, never suspecting that I would be doing the real thing (*The Batman*) pretty soon. When I got the *Justice League* assignment, it was still a regular size book. And I wrote what became two long *Manhunter* stories. The first Manhunter story, as it appeared, was actually written as two 17-page Manhunter stories.

Then after I'd done those, and before I'd resolved that plot line, *DC* expanded the book, and Julie [Schwartz] wanted to put the two Manhunter stories as one whole book rather than start off with the first one and go on from there.

So what you saw first was actually the third Justice League story I had written. And it was kind of weird because Julie came to me and said, "Write something that will happen before what you just did."

In my typical fashion, I had tried to really establish my Justice League in the first stories that I had written, and now I had to go back and do something that would appear beforehand in less space than I was used to. So it was all kind of backwards.

HALT AND FACE THE FURY OF--
--THE SQUADRON SUPREME!!
THAT'S "SUPREME"--NOT "SINISTER," AVENGERS!
JUST SO YOU'LL KNOW WHO CREAMED YOU!
*MET FIRST AND LAST WAY BACK IN #85-86.--MARVELOUS MARV.
©1980 Marvel Comics Group

Steve Englehart parodies the *Justice League of America* in *Avengers* 141. From left to right we have: Lady Lark (Black Canary), the Whizzer (Flash), Dr. Spectrum (Green Lantern), Golden Archer (Green Arrow) and Hyperion (Superman).

But I did that, and then the second Manhunter story was written as 34-pages. I had done *Giant Size Avengers* with stories that long, but as far as doing it monthly, I was quite happy at the time to be able to put the Manhunters, the Guardians, the Galaxy, and the Justice League all in there and get them all out again in two issues. I don't think I even had any further plans for the Manhunter at that time.

The stuff that I did later with the Privateer sort of grew organically as I worked on it. I began to start fitting that in, knowing it was going to get to those final stories. No, those first Manhunter stories were supposed to be complete in themselves.

DAVE: Is Batman Captain America except without a shield?

STEVE: Not at all. Captain America has similar physical abilities, but Captain America believes in an ideal. He exists because of America. And as I say, that does not have to be corny: that does not have to be naive.

He believes in standing for what the country stands for. And it makes him vulnerable in a sense. It makes him able to be hurt when that country doesn't live up to its ideals. And it's something he doesn't have much control over. So if the country screws up, he's going to get hurt and he can't do much about it.

To my mind, Captain America is a typical American. When America, in the '40s and '50s, was fairly right wing, Captain America was, correctly, right wing. When America, in the '60s and '70s, was liberal, Captain America was, correctly, liberal. If I were writing Captain America 20 years from now and times were fairly right wing, I would write him according to those times. I wouldn't write him the way I did before.

The Batman, on the other hand, is eternal, as far as I'm concerned. He's always the same. He's been the same since 1940, or should have been, in my opinion. He has been different. He was much more liberal under Denny O'Neill for example, but I never bought that, myself. I think that was excellent stuff, but it wasn't The Batman as I see The Batman.

The Batman, to me, is out on the edge, but in total control of himself at all times.

DAVE: What do you mean by out on the edge?

STEVE: His world goes a little crazy sometimes, but he is not crazy. People have suggested to me that The Batman is actually nuts, but I don't believe it. People have said that he's actually a fascist, but I don't think he is.

I think the Batman is the kind of guy who has decided to live in a crazy world, but he's the only sane guy there. And he's so sane partially because he's naturally balanced and partially because he refused to be anything but sane. Because of that he never slips up.

People have said, "Well, if he's not fascist, what gives him the right to go around scaring criminals, and so forth," and my point is that he only scares the people that deserve it. He doesn't bother the people who don't deserve it. And he's very good at knowing exactly what's right and what's wrong: cutting it to a fine line and living right on that line.

Steve Ditko's *Mr. A*—He's a fascist. With him, it's just yes or no, black and white. I'll kill you if you don't agree with me.

The Batman doesn't do that. The Batman's very certain about what's right and what's wrong, but he's not oblivious to compassion. He's not so locked into his vision that he can't roll with the punches. It would be real tough to hurt The Batman, I think.

I COULDN'T HEAR YOU BEFORE IN THE POD, SO YOU'RE GOING TO REPEAT IT FOR ME NOW!
NO, I SAID! YOU KNOW WHO I WORK FOR, BATMAN!
YOU CAN'T MAKE ANYTHING STICK!
MR. MURDOCK IS SPEAKING OF OUR BELOVED CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT, RUPERT THORNE, ROBIN!
YOU'VE MISSED OUT ON GOTHAM'S CHANGING POLITICAL FORTUNES!
BUT I'VE READ THE PAPERS--BETWEEN THE LINES! DOES THORNE REALLY CONTROL THE POLICE?
NO--NOT WITH COMMISSIONER GORDON IN CHARGE! HE CONTROLS THE COURTS!
AND THE POLICE IN MATTERS OF CITY POLICY--
--LIKE WHETHER THE BATMAN'S STILL WELCOME IN GOTHAM CITY!
HERE COMES THE POLICE--AND I'M READY TO MEET THEM WITH OPEN ARMS! HOW ABOUT YOU, BATMAN?
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

The Batman "...only scares the people that deserve it," as he does in this sequence from *Detective* 473.

© DC Comics, Inc

DAVE: They did that in the '60s.

STEVE: They did that in the '60s, yeah. The whole trip of Batman going "Argh!" over the human condition, I don't buy that. And the stuff that's gone on with him since my series, the stuff about him seeing Silver St. Cloud's face on another woman's face. It happened right after I left. I don't buy that. I don't think he would do that because the guy is not inhuman. He's very human *but* he's also very sure of who he is.

Captain America is also very human, but he's trying to live out an ideal, where-

". . .About 30% of a comic is the writing and 70% is the art . . ."

as The Batman's trying to live out stark reality. That's the difference between them.

DAVE: Would you say that The Batman is obsessed?

STEVE: Yeah, but not obsessed to the point of where he loses track of reality. He made this vow when he was a kid and he's still living it out. But he's not obsessed to the point of insanity or moral blindness or any of that.

It's just that the strongest thing in his life is to be The Batman. To be the guy who will bring criminals to justice. He's obsessed with that, but he's good at it, too.

DAVE: Let me check one point on Captain America. Would you say that Capatin America is what America is at a given time, or is he what America should be at a given time?

STEVE: He is what it should be at the time.

DAVE: Then, he will almost always be counter to what America is, since it is never perfect.

STEVE: No, because America's not always wrong. Therefore, striving to live the ideal doesn't mean that you're always against what America stands for.

After Watergate, Captain America, I believe, would have had to react the way I wrote him. That's why I wrote it, because I believe that. But I have no trouble with Captain America in the '50s being a Commie hunter.

I think, had I been writing during that period, I would have given him a little more consciousness, and a little more ability to differentiate between good Commies and bad Commies or [laughter] whatever, because it was simplistic . . .

DAVE: He would have been a little more sophisticated if you had worked on him.

STEVE: Yeah. It may not have been totally correct, but again, I'm not really responsible for what they did do with him in the '50s. I think he's striving for what makes America best. If America's striving for that too, then there's no reason why he shouldn't be just like everybody else. And if it's not, then he would be counter to the prevailing group.

DAVE: Do you prefer writing full script or Marvel style?

STEVE: I prefer Marvel style but The Batman stuff was done full script. At *DC*, in a sort of typical bureaucratic decision, they said, "Your strength is doing something else, but we'll make you do this." Well, again, it was a learning experience: it taught me something else. I still don't like it as much, because I prefer to react to the art work. I prefer to look at the art work, see what's there and then write what's necessary to come from that.

You can have problems if you're not looking at the art work while you are writing, and I try really hard to avoid that situation.

For example, this is not a reflection on Denny's ability as a writer, but he wrote a caption in the first issue of *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* that says, "Green Arrow turns around and grins a grin that would curl your toes" or something like that, and you're looking at a Neal Adams rendition of that exact scene. And when you're seeing it, there's no need to read it, you know.

But he didn't know what Neal was going to draw. Since that was the first one, he probably didn't even know who was going to draw the book when he sat down to do it. Maybe he did. I don't know.

I wrote *The Batman* without knowing who was going to draw it. I fully expected to get a couple of staff artists from *DC*, and it was just going to look awful. The fact that Marshall Rogers and Terry Austin came along was really a Godsend.

But you lose somewhat by telling the story without knowing what the pictures are going to be. Because even in the best written comic book story, the art is still more than half of the final product. I would say about 30 percent of a comic is the writing and 70 percent is the art. I personally can't enjoy a story unless it has good art and story.

People look at a book first, before they read it, and so it seems to me the art is most important. Therefore, the artist should have the freedom to do what he wants to do while he's telling the story. And then the writer should be able to look at that, just as the reader will look at that, and put in only what's necessary to make it work.

On the other hand, when I wrote *Detective* it was script-in-advance. The first two, with Simonson and Al Milgrom were done Marvel style and they got pretty loose. Both Walt and Al had to hustle them out. And they got away from what I was looking for.

In the last six scripts, by doing it script-in-advance, I was able to pace it exactly as I wanted to, and I think a large part of the success of that series was the real driving pace of the whole thing, which was necessary, I felt, to the character.

Marshall and Terry are both excellent people and artists, and so possibly if we had done it Marvel style, it would have come out just the same. But, it made me appreciate script-in-advance more, in that I was able to make those scripts work exactly right. And again, if they had been handed out to a couple of staff artists, it may have been the only way that those stories could have come together. So it's six of one and half a dozen of the other.

HEY KIDS!
CAPTAIN AMERICA NEEDS YOUR HELP. WHICH COMMIE BELOW IS A "GOOD" COMMIE?
NEXT CAP USES A PORTABLE THERMO-NUCEAR DEVICE TO MAKE MORE "GOOD" COMMIES

character © 1980 Marvel Comics Group

DAVE: Is there room for subtlety in comics?

STEVE: Sure. I'm reminded of that last couple of pages of the Joker strip, where Silver St. Cloud says good-bye to The Batman. It's practically all nuance. I mean, it's all half said sentences, and looks in the eyes, and people turning away, and that kind of stuff. Because the art is most of it, you're primarily dependent on the artist. A bad artist would have carried that scene out badly and you probably would have missed a lot of the subtleties that were inherent in it.

WELL HE'S FINISHED FOR NOW!
BATMAN--!
SILVER!
BATMAN--PLEASE! DON'T SAY ANYTHING!
I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY TO YOU!
MAYBE I KNOW WHAT YOU WANTED ME TO SAY THE OTHER NIGHT--
--ABOUT WHAT I'VE LEARNED OF YOU!
MAYBE I CAME BACK HERE--TO TELL YOU!
MAYBE I--
--I EVEN LOVE YOU!
SILVER--
BUT JUST NOW, I SAW THE BATMAN IN ACTION! NOT AS A NEWS ITEM ON TV--NOT AS A MYSTERIOUS HERO I'VE ALWAYS ADMIRED--!
I SAW YOU--THE MAN INSIDE! THE MAN I LOVE!
I SAW YOU FIGHTING WITH A MADMAN, STRADDLING A GIRDER IN THE BLINDING LIGHTNING STORM!
I LOVE YOU--BUT I COULDN'T LIVE WITH THAT! NEVER KNOWING WHAT EACH NIGHT WOULD BRING!
NEVER KNOWING WHEN YOUR LUCK WILL RUN OUT!
SILVER--
NO! IT'S OVER! I CAN'T LET IT GO ON ANY LONGER!
WE HAVE TO STOP BEFORE WE CAN'T STOP--BEFORE WE CAN'T--
--HELP--
--OURSELVES!
15
DON'T CALL ME!
STAY AWAY--
--PLEASE--
--BATMAN!
BATMAN!
BATMAN! GREAT NEWS!
©DC Comics Inc.

Is there room for subtlety in comics? Steve Englehart refers to this page from *Detective* 476 for his answer.

But I think the comic medium, as a medium, is unlimited. I don't think that there are any limitations on it. The limitations come from the current company structures, and more restrictions are being added all the time. You can do anything with the medium.

Up until *Star Wars*, you could never have done superheroes without comics. Now you can get them in the movies. But still, it's a unique art form. It's the only one which actually combines words and pictures like it does and so there are qualities inherent in it that you can get nowhere else. And I don't think that there's any limitations to that.

> ***". . .I think the comic medium, as a medium, is unlimited. The limitations come from the current company structures . . ."***

DAVE: Which artists do you prefer working with most?

STEVE: I can tell you who I really, really like working with, but I'd have to say that almost everybody that I've ever worked with I've enjoyed on one level or another. Because, again I like the variety of it. I mean, Sal Buscema gets a lot of shit. "Oh, he's just a funky comic book artist." But I'll tell you, from a writer's point of view, *Captain America* was really well served by Sal Buscema. You could tell him anything and it would appear, clearly laid out, the story clearly told. That is a really valuable talent, to be able to tell a story.

There were a couple of artists that I'd rather not name who couldn't tell a story to save their lives. And that's real tough, when you have to write stories with art that doesn't make any sense.

But the guys that I'd have to say that I really, really got off working with would be Marshall Rogers and Terry Austin. Usually my contact with the inker is real minimal, but Terry Austin was an extremely valuable part of that work. That in no way was meant to reflect on Marshall, because so was he. But both of those guys were on top of it.

I also like Frank Brunner, Gene Colan, and Jim Starlin. I've only worked once which Gil Kane, on *The Prisoner* book, with got shelved back in '76. But I've always thought Gil Kane was tremendous. I really like Gil's stuff a lot. I never worked with [Jack] Kirby, but I would have loved to have worked with him. I could go on, and on. I did some stuff with John Buscema.

I like guys who are really enthusiastic. I care more about enthusiasm than I care about necessarily artistic wonderfulness. For example, I was quite pleased working with George Perez when he started working on *The Avengers*. He lacked a little bit in anatomy and so forth, but he was just so inventive. I'd much prefer that than a guy who's been in the business 30 years and has just burned out.

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MIDNIGHT.
--UNIFORMS, CAP?
IT'S GOT TO BE, PARTNER. WE HAVE TO PRODUCE THE GYRO FOR THE SECRET EMPIRE, IF WE WANT THEM TO ACCEPT US--
--AND SINCE WE'RE BOTH FUGITIVES, WE CAN'T DO WHAT WE'D NORMALLY DO, AND ASK BRAND TO LOAN IT TO US.
BUT NOT EVERYONE THINKS WE'RE MURDEROUS VIGILANTES...YET. SO IF WE'RE CAUGHT TONIGHT...
...WELL, I CAN ONLY PRAY IT'S BY SOMEONE WHO STILL BELIEVES IN CAPTAIN AMERICA.

Captain America was really well served by Sal Buscema. You could tell him anything and it would appear, clearly laid out, the story clearly told . . ." Panel from *Captain America* 173

That leads sideways back to John Buscema, who is not really burned out, but who has achieved a kind of plateau. You're always going to get really nice visuals out of John, but you're not going to get anything really amazing that you've never seen before.

DAVE: When you dropped out of comics, that was per your plan of working at *DC* for a year and then going off to Europe?

STEVE: Yeah.

DAVE: Anything interesting in Europe?

STEVE: Europe!

DAVE: How long did you spend there?

STEVE: I was there for nine months. I left, in fact, three years ago yesterday. My wife and I flew to Germany and picked up a van that we had bought at the Volkswagon factory. We had a camping van so we could stop wherever we wanted to and whenever we wanted to. We were able to save a lot of money on hotels, and we were able to cook for ourselves and save on food expenses. We just went off, and until winter really came on, we just traveled around Europe, going wherever we wanted to, whenever we wanted to, staying as long as we wanted to.

". . .I'm no longer going to be a Marvel comics writer, or a DC comics writer, I'm going to be my own writer . . ."

It was just a dream. It was so wonderful. I love life experiences, like I said before. I love to go into a totally new culture and a totally new environment. And I could speak Spanish, German and French, so I wasn't like a gringo tourist, you know. And in Scandanavia they all speak English. So every place we went I could get into the culture of the place. And we'd just go in and do as much as we wanted to do, and when it was time to leave, we'd leave. It was perfect, and I really want to go back again as soon as I possibly can. As soon as I can get the money and the time together.

That is one of the things I hope to get out of my career as a novelist. To have projects which allow me to take time off in between, or go to Europe and write the book there, or whatever. Because it's just all part of the lifestyle that I'm trying to create for myself.

After five months, when winter started to come along, we went down to Majorca and spent the rest of the winter there, where I began to write my novel. As of today, I'm finished with that book. It is vastly different from what I started to write in Majorca. The same themes are there, the same characters, but it underwent a lot of metamorphoses as it developed.

I started work on the book, and then I came back to New York the following year and stayed in New York through the summer of '78. I was busy getting an agent and a publisher.

DAVE: Jim Shooter says that he hasn't worked on novels yet and won't start, until he first learns the form, because there is a form to a novel.

STEVE: Exactly. That's true.

DAVE: Did you learn "the form," or did you develop your own form?

STEVE: Well, both. Before I went into this, I looked around. I tried to figure out, how am I going to pull this off. I am now leaving the womb here, I'm no longer going to be a *Marvel* comics writer or a *DC* comics writer, I'm going to be my own writer. I'm going to get all those benefits about owning my own creation. But I'm also going to have the responsibilities of coming up with something that doesn't have established characters.

I came to the definite conclusion, which has only been strengthened through the years, that you cannot continue to write comic books and successfully do anything else. Comics has a particular head to it. And it you're good at writing comic books, you're not simultaneously going to be good at writing novels. You're dealing with different audiences and different forms. And so I said, "I'm going to have to get totally out of comic books." I had to totally end one career and start over again to do another career. That's what I knew I had to do, so that's what I did.

I haven't earned a whole lot of money in the last couple of years, because I've been in transition, but fortunately I have a wife who says if that's what you want to do, that's what we'll do. Now I'm at the point where I'm going to start reaping the benefits of all that work.

There are any number of people who are currently writing comic books who have tried to do something else, and they've all failed. Every one of them, as far as I know, has failed at doing something else successfully while continuing to write comic books.

What you have to do is say, "All right, this is Day One. I'm writing a novel.", and launch yourself into it. Maybe there's some mail order home study course that can tell you how to do both things simultaneously. I don't know what it is. All I

know is that I just had to start and learn as I went.

I went up a lot of blind alleys, I made wrong decisions, but it was all part of the learning process. And the proof that I learned it was that I was able to go back and say, "This was a wrong decision, this was a blind alley," and fix it. And in the end, my book has been accepted. Except for a few minor revisions, it's being taken as I wrote it.

When Jim Shooter wants to write novels, I think Jim Shooter is going to have to clear time for it. And I don't say just Jim Shooter, I think anybody, unless he really clears time for it, won't make it. Because you can't serve two masters.

DAVE: The name of your novel is *The Point Man*?

STEVE: That's right.

DAVE: What is a point man?

STEVE: Well, a point man, on one level, is the guy who gets out in front of an army movement, goes out there all by himself and scouts. In the calvary, they called him a scout. He's the guy who gets out at the point in front and looks for any danger; an early warning system. The point man for this novel is generally anybody who does that sort of thing.

My protagonist, Max August, is doing that on a lot of levels. He's working for a radio station. He's the man who defines the format for the radio station. He gets involved in international espionage, and has to go out on his own. It's a personal trip with him so he goes out to solve his own problems and not sit back and let the F.B.I. or the C.I.A. take care of it for him. And then there's a supernatural touch to it, too. And I don't want to get any further exactly into what that means, but it sort of works on a lot of different levels.

The nice thing about a novel is that it's up to you, and it's unlimited. You don't have to really think all the time, "Am I putting too many panels on this page? Can I get this story ended by page 17?" You know? Everything is just exactly as long as it needs to be and as deep as it needs to be and that's what I really like about it. The freedom to just kick out and experiment; to try new things, go back later and throw away a scene or make a scene twice as long, or adjust it. There's no limit on a novel except me.

I was dealing with my editor at *Dell* today, and he was quite refreshing. In the book business, they treat you as a talent, as an equal grown-up person who they want. You also want them, and so it's a symbiotic relationship. If they don't treat you right, you'll go somewhere else, and if you don't treat them right, they won't publish your book.

It's like both of you are carrying the weight. And my editor said to me today, "You know, I have a few suggestions for things that you should do just to fine tune it. But they're only suggestions. It's your novel in the final analysis and I'm not going to tell you that you have to do this." Part of that may be the fact that there's nothing so grossly wrong that he feels that he has to tell me, but that's the attitude in general, from what I understand in talking to people. It's your book. *You* live or die with it. *You're* the one that's going to collect the royalty on it, I mean, they'll collect part of the royalties, too, but they're not in the business of telling you how to write, or what to write, or how much to write, or when to write it. I like that.

I looked at television, I went to a convention in Phoenix, while I was working for *National*, and I spent some time with Dorothy Fontana—who is the honcho on *Star Trek* and still writes a lot of stuff—and I told her that I was going to L.A. the next week. She said, "Well, I've got friends at Universal. Go see them." So my wife and I went and saw her friends, and the friends said, "Okay, here's a list of what we're shooting today, here's a map of the studio, have a good time." We didn't do the tour, we just walked through Universal Studios looking at everything. It was wonderful.

". . .I began to see that television was just a big time comic book. All formula . . ."

And yet, I began to see that television was just a big time comic book. All formula. Characters that belonged to the company rather than to you. You'd get paid in thousands instead of hundreds, but you could get re-written by 17 "executive vice presidents-in-charge-of" on the way. If you want to write, television just ain't it. So I decided novels was the route to go and I still believe that. It gives me the freedom to put my ideas across the way I want to.

DAVE: How did you go about selling your idea for a novel to *Dell*?

STEVE: First, I got an agent. You don't necessarily need an agent, but particularly when you are living in California, and the book business is in New York, you want somebody. Also, my work in the comic book industry did not teach me how to negotiate with people. So I kind of needed somebody who could go in there and be hard-nosed. The longer I'm in this business, the more I learn how to play that game, but you want somebody to negotiate for you. It just makes things less tense.

If you're working with an editor, you don't want to be yelling at him over last week's payment. You hire and pay an agent 10 percent primarily to run interference for you; to take the flack and to do your dirty work.

I came to New York with about 200 pages of my novel, and went around to agents, and they all said, "You're doing it wrong. What you need is about 70 pages of the novel and a synopsis of the rest." So I went back and I did that and then I went back and submitted it again.

One nice thing about writers is whenever a new writer comes along, they'll say, "Well, see my agent." So I had the names of about 8 or 10 agents that I had been given as I traveled around Europe. There were a lot of writers in Majorca.

I sent my synopsis around to all those agents and some of them said no, and some of them said maybe. Nobody said yes. But the ones that said "maybe" told me why it wasn't "yes." They told me what had to be fixed. So I reworked it again, put it in a clearer format, took it back, eventually had a choice of three agents and picked one. Then my agent started following pretty much the same process with publishers. Eventually we got down to where both *Dell* and *Avon* wanted it, and *Dell* made the better offer, so I went with *Dell*.

You have to establish contacts and you have to get the rock rolling. Now that I've done one, I have an editor at *Dell* and I have an agent. The next one, which I'll be pitching in a month, should be easier to sell. If by chance the editor at *Dell* doesn't want it, we go and start submitting it around again. But, you know, I don't expect that to happen. Starting from scratch is tough, but once you get past that, it's like everything else; you just do it.

DAVE: Did you find that you developed a different writing style for novels? Did your comic book background cause you to write scenes which had greater visual potential for the reader?

STEVE: Yes to both of those, with a few qualifications. I've always thought visually. Way back to when I tried to be an artist, it helped me as a comic book writer

to be able to visualize what the pages should look like. I could tell in my own mind how the pages should be laid out. And even if it didn't come out that way, at least it was possible. I wasn't asking somebody to do something that was impossible. And that carries over.

When I started writing the novel, I really didn't know what was going to come out. I kind of thought, maybe I'll turn out to be a very literary writer, or maybe I'll turn out to be something else. But I've found out now, I'm still Steve Englehart. Although I'm now Stephen Englehart. [laughter].

DAVE: No middle initial?

STEVE: No. Jimmy Carter showed what happens to people who don't insist on their full name when they go public.

When you read *The Point Man*, if you're familiar with my stuff, you'll know that it's me that wrote it. But I developed that into the larger format. It's a me that's kind of expanded and more and more let loose in a sense, although not "unleashed." Everybody that gets "unleashed" goes berserk. I really didn't know. I thought maybe I'll turn out to write like somebody else. But I write like me, just a sort of more advanced, more progressed me. So I did get a new style. There is a difference to writing a novel. But it's still the same consciousness that's directing the style.

DAVE: Is this an advancement?

STEVE: Well, I hope so. I do take an optimistic view of things. I figure there's probably the *Peter Principle* working out there somewhere. I'll try something and I just won't be good enough to get that far. But I haven't gotten to that point yet. I don't want to stand still, I don't want to just kill time, I want to keep trying something new, finding out exactly what I can do. But if you didn't rise and advance when moving from 17 page melodrama to 350 page drama, you would fail. If I didn't have something more to offer than comic book mentality I would be in trouble. I'm not saying that comic books are worse than novels, but if you're offering the same thing, you won't succeed as a novelist. And I'm sure that if one of my books ever sells for a movie or something like that, and somebody asked me to write the screenplay, if I don't find something new to give the screenplay, I'll fail at that, because they're different media.

DAVE: Regardless of the medium, which do you think is more important to the story, the initial plotting or the final script?

STEVE: That's a tough one because you can argue it either way. I would say that if you had to put them both on a scale, I'd come down slightly on the side of the final scripting. I think, an ordinary plot can look really neat if people are saying things that you've never heard before and the narration is snappy and it moves right along. On the other hand, a dull plot is a dull plot. You can't ignore that.

As far as I know, I'm the only one that wrote comics who started off every month thinking, "What do I want my characters to go through in their heads," and *then* thought of a villain who would fit into that story. I know everybody that I can think of that I ever asked has said that they always thought of the menace first, and then fit the character development in second. I always want to make sure that the characters are real.

Probably some of my villains are not as imaginative as some of, say, Roy's villains. He specifically told me that he worked in the other direction. On the other hand, I really liked the way my characters developed over the years, and the things they went through, and I tried to make them all different. I think you can only do that if you approach it from the idea that they're the most important thing, and then take the rest of it from there.

"...You cannot continue to write comic books and successfully do anything else..."

DAVE: Why are you getting back to the comics now that you're a novelist?

STEVE: Because novels work on very long time scales. Everything is very drawn out. You sit down for a year and a half and you write a book, 15 months, in this case, for me. And then you finish that book and you mail it to New York, or whatever you do, and it takes a good month or two before your editor can really be ready to talk to you about it. Every step is a lot longer than in comics where you're turning over a couple of stories every week, and you're always involved in new stuff and everything's always late and this and that. You can't be late with a book. When it's done, it's done and it gets scheduled.

So I have these dead periods. Two summers ago, when I was finding an agent and sending stuff out to agents, I had time to kill, and then when I got an agent and he was sending it out to the publishers. I had time to kill again. So I called DC, each time, and I said, "I have a couple of free weeks. Can I get a story to write?" So I did some stuff. The same thing happened this time, except that this time they called me. Just about a week before I finished the novel, Jack Harris called me up and asked me to write some stories for him. So I did. There's been a footnote to that. I don't know if you've heard. Those stories are no longer with DC. Have you heard this?

DAVE: No.

STEVE: Well, it's interesting, and it further illuminates your question. The reason I come back to comics is that it's something I can do, and I can do it within free time periods that are a prerequisite to what else I'm doing.

But the thing is I don't need comics, and it puts me in kind of a unique position. There are so many people who have to take whatever they can get from the companies.

The situation briefly is this, Jack Harris called me up, asked me to do some stories and I said, "Okay. I hear that the top rate is $32 a page these days." (I was wrong, it's $31. But that's what I'd heard. I mean, I haven't been in comics for a year and a half, I haven't read them, so I didn't know.) Jack said, "Don't worry about the money. We didn't know if we could get you for this. This is a special project, and I'll get you more than $32."

So I came to New York, I turned in the stories, and Jack told me how they were going to make a lot of money off this. It was the big news of the month that Englehart and Rogers were back at *DC*. They were going to ship them early to specialty stores and get a lot of direct sales which means extra money.

Then I went down to Paul Levitz and he said, "$31, take it or leave it." And I said, "But Jack promised me at least $33." And he said, "Jack has no authority to do that, $31, take it or leave it." So I went away and I thought about it and I said, "I'll be god-damned if I'm going to stand for this. He promised me this money and I don't care if he had the authority of not. Fire him then, but I did the stories."

So last Thursday, I went back in, and I said, "Okay, Paul, what's the final decision?" And he said, "$31." And I said.

"No. I'm taking my scripts back." And I went down to Jeanette [Kahn - Publisher] and I said, "Jeanette, we've got a problem." and she said, "Well, I've heard the story and I stand behind my people," and I said, "Fine, but I'm taking my scripts back." And Jack jumped up and he said, "Wait, wait, sit down, sit down, we'll talk this over." So he sat me down. And Jack disappeared with Jeanette and Paul for half an hour and came back and said "Well, I don't remember what I said to you, but we'll compromise, we'll give you $32." And I said, "No. I get at least $33 or nothing." And he said, "Well, we' can't go above that." And I said, "Fine.", and I took the scripts back. Two 25-page things for Jack, which had been a Madame Xanadu, Deadman and Demon team-up and one 17-page story that I'd done for Julie; a Superman and Creeper team-up.

I took them back, went to *Marvel*, and said, "Would you like to buy these" and they said, "Yeah, but Shooter's out of town, we can't give you a definite answer until Monday." I got home that night, and *Eclipse* called me up. Dean Mullaney said he wanted them. And over the weekend he bought them for $33 a page. So they're now going to be published by *Eclipse*, but with the characters altered and re-written. Marshall's still going to draw them, only now he's drawing them for *Eclipse*. It was just like it was with Conway four years ago. I don't deserve to get treated like that. I delivered the goods for *DC*.

When I got to town, I kept hearing all these stories about how *DC* was getting very cheap and it was real tough to get an extra buck out of them and all that, and I said, "Well, I'm not going to have any problem because I got promised this rate." And I was so amazed when this came down. We were talking 67 pages, two 25-page stories and a 17 pager and so at an increment of a dollar we're talking $67. In exchange for the $67, they lose the big news from *DC* for the month and they lose three Englehart and Rogers stories which would have made them a bunch of money. The Superman/Creeper story was already being drawn by Curt Swan, so they now lose all that artwork. They can't get somebody else to write a story to fit those pictures, because it's my story and I never signed anything. I mean they're taking an incredible loss over $67 and you'd have to ask them, why they felt that that was worth it. Nobody that I've talked to can understand it. And it sure amazed me. If it were any more ambiguous than it is, or if we were talking about a difference of thousands of dollars, I could understand it, but this . . .? I don't know.

So anyway, I did these stories for comics, and they're going to appear under the *Eclipse* logo. I got my money, I'm happy. And I didn't sign any more prior agreements so I'm even happier.

Marshall's still doing the artwork. He was going to do them when I went over to *Marvel*, and now he's going to do them for *Eclipse*. We're going to expand them. I originally had to fit those stories into the Madame Xanadu and the Superman molds. As it is, now that they're ours, since they're copyrighted by us, and we get all that stuff out of Dean, we're going to expand them, change the characters, and do some re-writing. In fact, the way we're going to do it is a combination of full script and Marvel style. Marshall will have scripts in advance from which to draw, but then I'm going to take his final artwork and make any changes that I want to, after looking at the artwork. So it's sort of a synthesis of both styles. They're going to be some nice jobs when they finally come out.

". . .Straight media, the real world, looks down on comics . . ."

DAVE: So this isn't a case of you coming back to comics after doing your novel, this is just periodically making money to go on vacation.

STEVE: Yeah, I deliver the goods, you know. Jack Harris was quite satisfied with these stories. Julie was quite satisfied with these stories. I'm not slumming, and I'm not trying to do hack work to fill in time. If I'm writing a comic book story, I'll write a good comic book story. But it's secondary for me now. It's like novels is what I do, and in the time period in between, I fill in with something else.

DAVE: Is that your career now?

STEVE: For the foreseeable future. I really do think that somewhere along the line one of these books is going to sell to the movies. At which point, even if I don't do the screenplay, I will be introduced into that whole world and something else will come of that. But I like novels best because it's primarily me, and I own it and then I sell it to the movies, sell it to the magazines for serialization, sell it to the foreign markets.

It's a big difference, really owning your own material. Knowing that you did it, and you get the benefits from it, rather than you did it, and *Marvel* or *DC* gets the benefits from it. Every other aspect of writing works that way. It's only comic books that work the way they do. And once I've seen the outside world, there's no way I'm going to take any shit from these guys. Play those games if you want to, but not with me.

DAVE: Do you look on your comic book writing years as a type of apprentice work for what you're doing now?

STEVE: Yes, but I'd like to tell anybody who's reading this, that if you think you should become a comic book writer so that you can apprentice to becoming a novelist, forget it. It's a bad idea. Comic books, to the real world, are just childish pieces of bullshit.

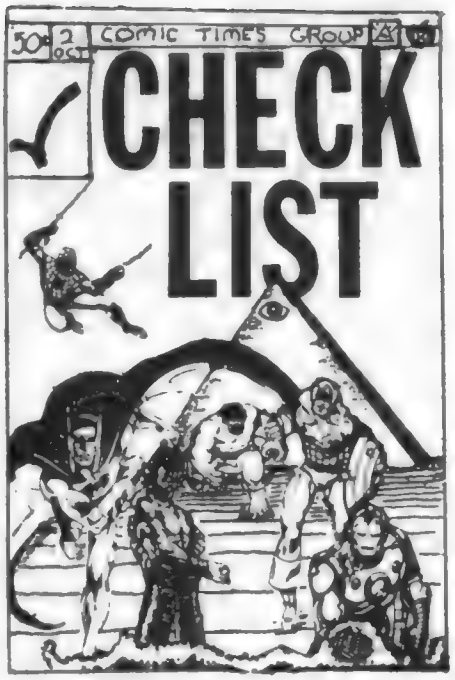
I thought, when I went around to sell my stuff, that because I was the number one comic book writer in the country, I would be able to go in there and they would take me as a great savior. What happened was, in most cases, they said, "Oh, well, comic book writers, they can't write, it's all childish drivel." I found out that not only did I have no credentials, I had negative credentials, and that's a tough road. Eventually, what I had to show them won them over. But it wasn't nearly as easy as I thought it would be when I went in there.

Comics taught me how to tell a story, how to get on, how to get off, how to do stuff without messing around. And so for my personal development, yeah, it was worthwhile.

But, if you want to become a novelist, be a novelist. Don't try to be a comic book writer to learn how to write books or something. Or else be prepared to really pay for it.

Again, look at all the guys who have gone to L.A. to break into television. All of them had very limited, if not to say, no success, at it. They do Saturday morning cartoon shows, cheap science fiction movies, but nothing really worthwhile on a Hollywood scale has come out of this.

Nobody respects comic books. When you read in straight media that this story was like a comic book, they don't mean that they liked it. Straight media, the real world, looks down on comics. *We* all know what they are, and what they can be, but you pay for it if you try to take it somewhere else. ■



Marvel

AMAZING ADVENTURES (13): Reprinting *X-Men* 7, by Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Chic Stone.

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN (211): Guest starring the Sub-Mariner, Spider-Man tries to halt the rampage of the monarch of Atlantis in this tale by Denny O'Neill, John Romita Jr. and Joe Sinnott.

AVENGERS (202): Concluding the adaptation of Jim Shooter's Avengers novel, "This Evil Undying" by David Michelinie, George Perez and Dan Green

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA (22): As Apollo learns the strange ways of the Bola Warriors, Jolly goes on a mission of vengeance against The Food Pirates. Written and penciled by Walt Simonson and inked by Klaus Janson.

CAPTAIN AMERICA (252): Batroc and Mr. Hyde team-up against Captain America in this tale written by Roger Stern and drawn by John Byrne and Joe Rubinstein.

CONAN (117): Mark DeMatteis takes over as Conan's scripter with this tale pencilled by John Buscema.

DEFENDERS (90): The Defenders and Daredevil join forces against the Mandrill and his legions. Script by Ed Hannigan, with art by Don Perlin and Pablo Marcos.

DOCTOR STRANGE (44): Dr. Strange fights a death-duel with the Shadow Queen as his adventure in the realm of the Black Mirror comes to a conclusion. Written by Chris Claremont and drawn by Gene Colan and Dan Green. Cover by Michael Golden.

FANTASTIC FOUR (225): The FF team up with Thor to save the life of an alien viking god. Written by Dough Moench with art by [illegible]

FANTASY MASTERPIECES: (13): Reprinting *The Silver Surfer* 13, "The Dawn of the Doomsday Man" by Stan Lee, John Buscema and Dan Adkins, and *Warlock* 10, "How Strange My Destiny" by Jim Starlin and Steve Leialoha.

THE GHOST RIDER (51): Rock 'n' roll and spiritualism merge in this tale by Michael Fleisher and Don Perlin. Also featured is a Night Rider western by Fleisher with art by Carmine Infantino and Mike Esposito.

IRON MAN (141): Down in the Bahamas, Iron Man fights against the Force and Justin Hammer. Story by David Michelinie and drawn by Bob Layton.

INCREDIBLE HULK (254): Four crooks recreate the Fantastic Four's space flight, gain super powers and test them against the Hulk. Story by Bill Mantlo and art by Sal Buscema.

KING CONAN (4): Conan and Conn fall victim to the death-dealing "Shadows in the Skull." Script by Roy Thomas, art by John Buscema and Ernie Chan.

MACHINE MAN (18): Alpha Flight, Canada's super-team, take on the Machine Man. Story by Tom DeFalco, art by Steve Ditko.

MARVEL'S GREATEST COMICS (96): Reprinting *Fantastic Four* 115 by Stan Lee, Archie Goodwin, John Buscema and Joe Sinnott.

MARVEL PREMIERE (57): Marvel's version of DR. WHO. Written by Wagner and Mills, drawn by Dave Gibbons.

MARVEL SUPER ACTION (26): Reprinting *Avengers* 85, "The Swordsman Strikes" by Roy Thomas, Gene Colan and Sam Grainger.

MARVEL TALES (122): Reprinting *Spider-Man* 145, "Gwen Stacy is Alive . . .And Well . . .?" by Gerry Conway, Ross Andru, Frank Giacoia and Dave Hunt.

MARVEL TEAM-UP (100): This double-sized issue teams Spider-Man and the Fantastic Four against Karma. Story by Chris Claremont and Frank Miller. Also featured is a Claremont-Miller Wolverine/Daredevil team-up.

MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE (70): Written by Mark Gruenwald and Ralph Macchio, pencils by Mike Nasser with inks by Gene Day. A solo Thing story as he fights against Live Wire and Shellshock.

MASTER OF KUNG FU (95): Shang-Chi is pitted against the man called Samiadat in this story by Doug Moench, Mike Zeck and Gene Day.

MICRONAUTS (24): SHIELD guest-stars as the Micronauts encounter Mentallo and The Fixer. Also featured is another installment of *Tales of the Microverse*. Story by Bill Mantlo, penciled by Pat Broderick and inked by Armando Gil. Cover by Michael Golden.

MOON KNIGHT (2): Featuring a new villain, The Slasher. Moon Knight tries to put a stop to his murder spree. Story by Doug Moench, pencils by Bill Sienkiewicz.

PETER PARKER (49): The first appearance of The Smuggler. Story by Roger Stern with art by Marie Severin and Bruce Patterson. Also the White Tiger mini-series begins this issue by Stern and Denys Cowan

POWER MAN AND IRON FIST (66): Colleen Wing and Misty Knight are threatened by Sabertooth and the Constrictor. Story by Mary Jo Duffy, pencils by Kerry Gammill.

ROM (13): Striken with amnesia, Rom takes on the Plunderer and his murderous Pirates, in this tale by Bill Mantlo and Sal Buscema. Beginning this issue is a backup feature, *Saga of the Space Knights*, featuring tales of ROM before he came to earth.

SGT. FURY (161): Reprinting *Sgt. Fury* 64, "The Peacemonger" by Gary Friedrich, Dick Ayers and John Severin

SPIDER-WOMAN (33): Spider-Woman descends into San Francisco's netherworld in this story by Marc DeMatteis and Steve Leialoha.

STAR TREK (9): A plague of madness, which has destroyed one starship, threatens the Enterprise. Written by Martin Pasko, pencils by Dave Cockrum

STAR WARS (42): Part 4 of Marvel's adaptation of *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. Written by Archie Goodwin with art by Al Williamson and Carlos Garzon.

TALES TO ASTONISH (13): Reprinting *Sub-Mariner* 13, written by Roy Thomas, with art by Marie Severin and Joe Sinnott.

THOR (302): The Thunder God fights a special kind of vampire named Synerge. Written by Ralph Macchio and Mark Gruenwald with art by Keith Pollard and Chic Stone

WHAT IF (24): "What If Gwen Stacy Had Never Died?" by Tony Isabella, Gil Kane and Frank Giacoia.

X-MEN (140): Guest starring Alpha Flight, the X-Men stalk the Northern Wilderness for Wendigo. Written by Chris Claremont with art by John Byrne and Terry Austin

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL (14): Spider-Man and Dr. Strange team up in this book-length tale guest starring Dr. Doom and the rock group Shrapnel. Story by Denny O'Neill and pencils by Frank Miller

CONAN ANNUAL (6): Beginning the adaptation of "Conan of the Isles", a novel written by L. Sprague De Camp. Script by Roy Thomas with art by John Buscema and Ernie Chan.

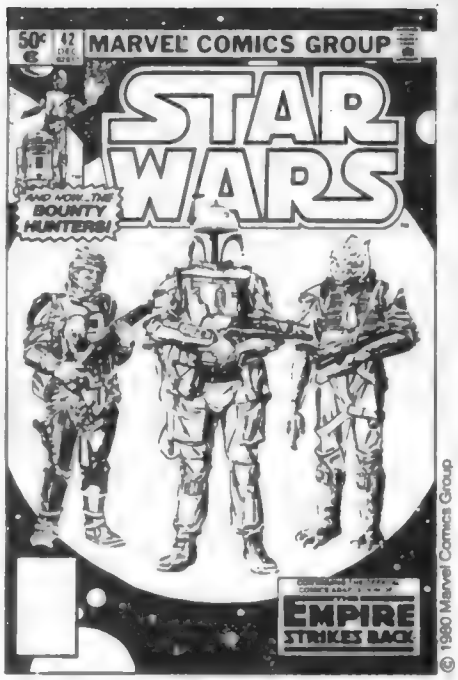
CRAZY (68): The usual crazy smorgasbord

HOWARD THE DUCK (8): This issue features "Duck Man" by Bill Mantlo and Marshall Rogers, "The Grey Panther" by Mantlo, Gene Colan and Dave Simons. Cover by John Pound.

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN (58): The conclusion of the adaptation of Andrew J. Offut's "Conan and the Sword of Skelos" by Roy Thomas, John Buscema and Tony Dezuniga.

DC

ACTION (514): "Countdown of the Killer Computer" by Wolfman, Swan and Chiarmonte. Atom/Airwave: "Sunspotter's Crime Collection" by Rozakis, Tanghal and DeMulder. (9/25)



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BATMAN (330): "Target" by Wolfman, Irv Novick. (9/11)

BRAVE & BOLD (169): "Angel of Mercy, Angel of Death" by Mike W. Barr and Jim Aparo. Nemisis: "The Council Calls for Death" by Cary Burkett and Dan Spiegle. (9/25)

DETECTIVE (497): "Bad Day in Baja" by Conway, Newton and Adkins. Batgirl: "In Barbara Gordon---Murder" by Burkett, Delbo and Giella. (9/25)

FLASH (292): "Mirror, Mirror, Off the Wall" by Cary Bates and Don Heck. "The Hostage of Precinct 13" featuring Firestorm by Gerry Conway, George Perez and Bob Smith. (9/11)

G.I. COMBAT (225). (9/11)

GREEN LANTERN (135): "Dr. Polaris Conquers the Universe" by Wolfman and Staton. Adam Strange: "The Zeta Bomb Maneuver" by Laurie S. Sutton, Rodin Rodriguez and Bruce Patterson. (9/25)

HOUSE OF MYSTERY (288): Mike Kaluta cover. (9/25)

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES (270): "What is the Dark Man?" by Conway, Jimmy James. (9/25)

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MARVEL COMICS GROUP
MIGHTIEST MONARCH OF A TIME LOST IN MAN!
KING CONAN
THE EPIC AND BRUTALLY SAGA THAT HAD TO BE TOLD!
CONAN vs. THOTH-AMON
--TO THE DEATH!
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MYSTERY IN SPACE (114): "Killing Time" by Conway and Tom Yeates, "Battlecry" by Skeates and Steve Ditko, "Betrayal on Gamma Nova" by Wessler and Johnny Craig, "Second Chance" by Mishkin and Cohen, Von Eeden and Celardo, "The One That Matters" by Levitz and Spiegle. (9/25)

WORLD'S FINEST (266): "The Last Laugh of Lady Luna" by Burkett, Buckler and Smith. Also featuring Green Arrow, Hawkman, Red Tornado and Shazam solo stories. (9/11)

UNKNOWN SOLDIER (246): "Only the Desert Winds" by Haney, Dick Ayers and Talaoc. "The Ruptured Duck" by Burkett, Ayers, and Adkins. (9/11)

SUPERBOY (12): "Clark Kent—Reluctant Hero of Smallville" by Bates, Kurt Schaffenberger and Dave Hunt. "Day of the Alien Scoop" by E. Nelson Bridwell, Tanghal and Kim De Mulder. (9/25)

SUPER FRIENDS (39): "The 'Future' Son of Overlord" by Bridwell, Fradon and Colletta. "The Boogey Mania Will Get You" by Bridwell, Tanghal and Colletta featuring the Wonder Twins. (9/25)

TEEN TITANS (2): "Enter the Terminator" by Marv Wolfman, Perez and Tanghal. (9/11)

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WARLORD (40): "Brotherhood of Hate" by Mike Grell and Colletta. "Wizard World" by Grell and Colletta. (9/25)

WONDER WOMAN (274): "One Super Villain, Made to Order" by Conway, Jose Delbo and Dave Hunt. Huntress: "To Speak from the Shadows" by Paul Levitz, Joe Staton, and Steve Mitchell. (9/11)

Warren

CREEPY (123): Includes "Majority of One" by Bruce Jones and Leo Duranona, "Circus of the Bizarre" by Roger McKenzie, Carmine Infantino and A. Toz, "The Slave" by Jaimie Brocaw, "They Don't Make Movies" by Gerry Boudreau, Carmine Infantino and Alfredo Alcala, "Hands of Fate" by Carl Wessler and Martin Salvador, "Fate is a Joker" by Carl Wessler and Jivez and "Bring on Clowns" by Michael Fleisher, Val Mayerik and Rudy Nebres. (9/30)

EERIE (116): Featured are "Joe Guy: What a Guy" by Jim Stenstrum and Abel Laxamana, "Cajun" by Budd Lewis and E.R. Cruz, "Star Warriors/Plunderworld" by Rich Margopolis and Fred Redondo and "Huckster" by Victor del Fuente. (9/16)

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FAMOUS MONSTERS (169): Release date is (9/21)

VAMPIRELLA (92): Featured are: "Bracelets, Demons and Death", a Vampirella story by Will Richardson and Ruby Nebres, "Encore for Annubis", a Pantha story by Rich Margopolis, Leo Duranona and Alex Toth, and "Wormbrand" by Gerry Boudreau and Auraleon. (9/30)

The National Lampoon

THE NATIONAL LAMPOON (September, 1980): This issue looks at The Past. Among the comic features are Berni Wrightson's "The Barbarians", M.K. Brown's two page full-color spread, "Self Portrait" and Rick Geary's "Quake of '33" about the earthquake in Long Beach, California. Included in *The Funny Pages* are Frank (Foolbert Sturgeon) Stack's "Frank Crankcase's Time Machine" and strips by Holly Tuttle, Bobby London and B.K. Taylor.

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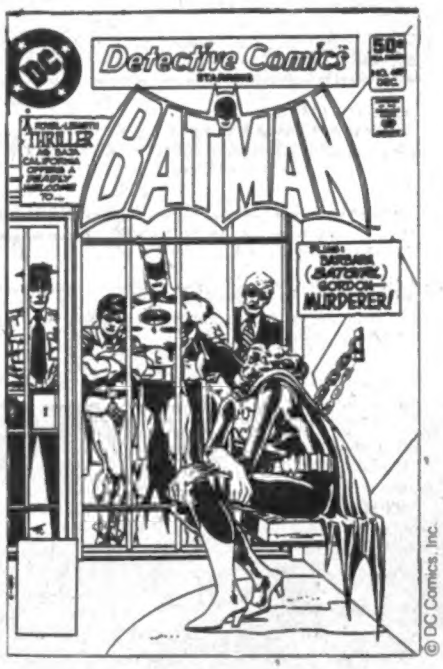

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Letters . . .

I picked up a copy of the first issue of your magazine at the Comic Art Gallery, since I like to keep abreast of the publications dealing with our field.

It would appear that you've had relatively little to publish in your first issue in the way of either hard news or strong articles. Fully half the issue appears to be preoccupied with the latest Hollywood outpourings—none of them comics-related. Both the pieces on the Justice Society and Kirby at DC seem superficial—based on reading issues and little more. (Based in NYC as you are, I'm surprised you didn't conduct some interviews or do other research to bolster these pieces with direct quotes from those involved with their subject matter.) David Singer appears to be unaware that DC published *two* separate comics in the forties, one of them *Flash Comics* and the other *All-Flash*. The former was (for most of its history) a monthly, a companion to *Sensation Comics* and *All-American Comics*, featuring the Flash and Hawkman along with a variety of other backup characters. *All-Flash* was the Flash's solo book. *All-Flash* had thirty-odd issues; it was *Flash Comics* which ran 104 issues before being discontinued, and the numbering of which was picked up for the revived *The Flash*.

I don't know from whom you got your news about HM, but you have the title of Moebius's "Shore Leave" as "Shore Line." The story was published in two parts, but Paul Kirchner's "Shaman" is not a "replacement," for the Moebius story in any sense; it's simply a story which ran in the next issue (September).

The Joe Jusko interview is interesting (and more solid than the Michael Fleisher interview; Fleisher was better interviewed in *The Comics Journal*) but Joe is wrong about his June 1978 HM cover being banned in England. The *issue* was banned, but not on account of the cover.

The Comic Times would appear to be trying to do what *The Comics Journal* already does very well, and *Comics Feature* is also trying to do. The field is getting a bit crowded. None the less, I wish you well and hope that your subsequent issues will be better ones.

With All best wishes

Ted White

We duly note your corrections. The mistake on the Moebius story was a proofreading error and it was our understanding that "Shore Leave" would be replaced by Kirchner's "Shaman." Obviously we misunderstood our source. Refer to **Sorry About That Chief** on page 82 for our acknowledgment of the Golden age **Flash** goof. As for our editorial direction we do not intend to exclusively cover comics (see this month's editorial) so reviews of **The Shining** and **The Empire Strikes Back** (which are both strong visual films that are related to comic book genres) are certainly relevent to the magazine. The only resemblance between **The Comic Times**, **Comics Feature** and **The Comics Journal** is that we also report extensively on the comic field. The difference is that the **Times** gives a wider coverage of the arts.

Hopefully this issue was more to your liking. (MG)

What about the rest of you? What do you think of *The Comics Times*? What do you want to see in this magazine? Write and let us know we look forward to hearing from you.

ANSWERS TO WHIZ & THE KID

1. Charles Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters located in Westchester, New York.
2. The Blackbird.
3. Ororo Monroe.
4. Cain Marko, a.k.a. Juggernaut.
5. Bolivar Trask did it in issues 14–16 of the original X-Men.
6. He was better known as Thunderbird, currently believed to be dead.
7. The long gone and better forgotten Ogre.
8. The Canadians knew Weapon X as a Captain.
9. Eric The Red.
10. Beast belongs to the Avengers, Iceman and Angel were Champions, and Wolverine was part of Alpha Flight.
11. Peter Niklovetich Rasputin.
12. Cosmonaut Mikhail Rasputin.
13. Jigsaw, Cutthroat, and Arcade. Take away 1 point if you listed The Punisher. (It's amazing that Kurt Wagner is still alive!)
14. Asteroid M.
15. He is usually seen with Senior Flight Attendant Amanda Sefton. A very good reason to live.
16. Racing and wrestling a buffalo.
17. Dr. Peter Corbeau.
18. Near Lake Baikal in Siberia.
19. This is the name of the Japanese freighter that the X-Men spent six weeks on after leaving the Savage Land.
20. That old skinflint Angus MacWhirter.

Sorry About That Chief . . .

The Comics Times was wrong in crediting the Space Ranger sketch (in issue #1) as a preview of Joe Kubert's new series in the revived *Mystery in Space*. The sketch was drawn by Joe Staton. Space Ranger will not be a regular series, only one story is scheduled

In the item concerning the White Tiger backup series in *Peter Parker The Spectacular Spider-Man* last month, the name of the penciler was misspelled. The correct spelling is Denys Cowan.

In last month's article *The Legendary Justice Society of America*, it is stated that the numbering of the current *Flash* comic continued at 105 from the Golden Age *All-Flash* comic. The numbering actually continued from another Golden Age book entitled *Flash Comics*. The quarterly *All-Flash* lasted only 32 issues. Thank you to Ira Brad Matetsky for this information.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

GEORGE PEREZ chats with David M. Singer about the Teen Titans, moving to DC; Janus and the Avengers.

THE NEXT TIME YOU BON VOYAGE, CHARLIE BROWN, RIDE A BLACK STALLION
by
Don McGregor

A View From the Underground:
THE INNER CITY ROMANCE COMIC
by Mark Gasper

BIRTH OF THE VIDEOZINE
by
Frank Lovece

DOPIN' DAN by Ted Richards
BLOWTORCH by Murad Gumen

Whatever Happened to . . . .GARDNER FOX?

PLUS
News, The James Burns Media Report,
a new comic strip by CHARLES VESS, Whiz and the Kid and much more!

THE COMIC TIMES #3
COMING SOON TO A STORE NEAR YOU!

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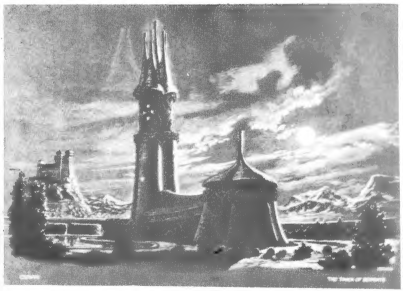

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BLOWTORCH by MURAD GUMEN

DR WHO:
A Cult Phenomenon

Englehart takes DC scripts to Eclipse . . .RAW . . .James Bond Comic dead . . .Media News . . . . . "Skyships and Earth Nymphs" a profile of Rick Bryant by John Warner . . .A review of the Blues Brothers by Andy Helfer . . .Welcome Back Bugs . . .Whatever Happened to Tony Isabella? . . . .Whiz and the Kid . . .Starlin to Kill Captain Marvel . . .And more inside . . . .